

there is a wall about it, a wall of fire: It hath a spring in it, and a fountain, but it is a spring shut up and a fountain sealed, which sends its streams abroad, Prov. v. 16. But it is itself carefully locked up, that it may not by any injurious hand be muddied or polluted. The souls of believers are as gardens inclosed, grace in them is as a spring shut up there in the hidden man of the heart, where the water that Christ gives is a well of living water, John iv. 14.—vii. 38. The Old Testament church was a garden inclosed by the partition wall of the ceremonial law, the Bible was then a spring shut up and a fountain sealed, it was confined to one nation; but now the wall of separation is removed, the gospel preached to every nation, in Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew.

2. The products of this garden, it is as the garden of Eden, where the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, Gen. ii. 9. Thy plants, or plantation, are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, ver. 13. It is not like the vineyard of the man void of understanding, that was all grown over with thorns and nettles; but here are fruits, pleasant fruits, all trees of frankincense, and all the chief spices, ver. 14. Here is great plenty of fruits and great variety, nothing wanting which might either beautify or enrich this garden, might make it either delightful or serviceable to its great Lord: every thing here is the best of the kind; their chief spices were much more valuable, because much more durable than the choicest of our flowers. Solomon was a great master in botany as well as other parts of natural philosophy; he treated largely of trees, 1 Kings iv. 33. and perhaps had reference to some specific qualities of the fruits here instanced in, which made them very fit for the purpose for which he alludes to them; but we must be content to observe in general, that plants in the church, and graces in the saints, are very fitly compared to these fruits and spices; for, 1. They are planted and do not grow of themselves, the trees of righteousness are the planting of the Lord, Isa. lxi. 3. grace springs from an incorruptible seed. 2. They are precious and of high value, hence we read of the precious sons of Zion and their precious faith, they are plants of renown. 3. They are pleasant and of a sweet savour to God and man, and, as strong aromatics, diffuse their fragrance. 1. They are profitable and of great use; saints are the blessings of this earth, and their graces are their riches with which they trade as the merchants of the east with their spices. 5. They are permanent, and will be preserved to good purpose when flowers are withered and good for nothing. Grace reduced into glory will last for ever.

15. A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. 16. ¶ Awake, O north-wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out; let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

These seem to be the words of the spouse, the church, in answer to the commendation which Christ the Bridegroom had given of her as a pleasant fruitful garden. Is she a garden?

1. She owns her dependence upon Christ himself to make this garden fruitful; to him she has an eye, ver. 15. as the fountain of gardens, not only the founder of them by whom they are planted, and to whom they owe their being, but the fountain of them by whom they are watered, and to whom they owe their continuance and well-being, and without whose constant supplies they would soon become like the dry and barren wilderness; to him she gives all the glory of her fruitfulness, as being nothing without him: O fountain of gardens, fountain of all good, of all grace, do not thou fail me. Doth a believer say to the church, All my springs are in thee, in thee, O Zion? Psalm lxxxvii. 7. the church transmits the praise to Christ, and faith to him, All my springs are in thee; thou art the well of living waters, Jer. ii. 13. out of which flow the streams from Lebanon, the river Jordan, that had its rise at the foot of mount Lebanon, and the waters of the sanctuary which issued out from under the threshold of the house, Ezek. xlvii. 1. They that are gardens to Christ must acknowledge him a fountain to them from whose fullness they receive, and to whom it is owing that their souls are as a watered garden, Jer. xxxi. 12. The city of God on earth is made glad with the river that flows from this fountain, Psalm xvi. 4. and the new Jerusalem has its pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 1.

2. She implores the influences of the blessed Spirit to make this garden fragrant, ver. 16. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south. This is a prayer, 1. For the church in general, that there may be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon it in order to its flourishing estate. Minister's gifts are the spices, when the Spirit is poured out these flow forth, and then the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, Isa. xxxii. 15. This prayer was answered in the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 1. ushered in by a mighty wind; then the apostles who were bound up before flowed forth and were a sweet savour to God, 2 Cor. ii. 15. 2. For particular believers. Note, 1. Sanctified souls are as gardens, gardens of the Lord, inclosed for him. 2. Graces in the soul are as spices in these gardens, that in them which is valuable and useful. 3. It is very desirable that the spices of grace should flow forth both in pious and devout affections, and in holy, gracious actions, that with them we may honour God, adorn our profession, and do that which will be grateful to good men. 4. The blessed Spirit in his operations upon the soul is as the north and the south wind, which blows where it listeth and from several points, John iii. 8. There is the north wind of convictions and the south wind of comforts; but all, like the wind, brought out of God's treasures and fulfilling his word. 5. The flowing forth of the spices of grace depends upon the gales of the Spirit, he stirs up good affections and works in us both to will and to do that which is good, it is he that makes manifest the savour of his knowledge by us. 6. We ought therefore to wait upon the Spirit of grace for his quickening influences, to pray for them, and to lay our souls under them. God has promised to give us his Spirit, but he will for this be enquired of.

3. She invite Christ to the best entertainment the garden affords. Let my beloved then come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits; let him have the honour of all the products of the garden, it is fit he should, and let me have the comfort of his acceptance of them, for that is the best account they can be made to turn to. Observe, 1. She calls it his garden, for those that are espoused to Christ call nothing their own, but what they have devoted to him and desire may be used for him. When the spices flow forth, then it is fit to be called his garden, and not till then: The fruits of the garden are his pleasant fruits, for he both planted them and watered them, and gave the increase. What can we pretend to merit at Christ's hands, when we can invite him to nothing but what is his own already? 2. She begs he would visit it, and accept of what it produced. The believer can take little pleasure in his garden unless Christ the beloved of his soul come to him, nor have any joy of the fruits of it unless they redound some way or other to the glory of Christ, and he will think all he has well bestowed upon him.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have, 1. Christ's gracious acceptance of the invitation which his church had given him, and the kind visit which he made to her, ver. 1. 2. The account which the spouse gives of her own folly in putting a slight upon her beloved, and the plunge she was at by reason of his withdrawals, ver. 2—3. 3. The enquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem concerning the amiable perfections of her beloved, ver. 9. and her particular answer to that enquiry, ver. 10—16. Unto you that believe he is thus precious.

I. I AM come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

These words are Christ's answer to the church's prayer in the close of the foregoing chapter, let my beloved come into his garden; here he is come and lets her know it. See how ready God is to hear prayer; how ready Christ is to accept the invitations that his people give him, though we are backward to hear his calls and accept his invitations. He is free in condescending to us while we are shy of ascending to him. Observe how the return answered the request and outdid it.

1. She called him her beloved, and really he was so, and therefore invited him because she loved him; in return to this he called her his sister and spouse, as several times before, chap. iv. Those that make Christ their best beloved shall be owned by him in the nearest and dearest relations.

2. She called the garden his, and the pleasant fruits of it his, and he acknowledged them to be so. It is my garden, it is my spice. When God was displeased with Israel he turned them off to Moses, they are thy people, Exod. xxxii. 7. and he called the appointed feasts of the Lord their appointed feasts, Isa. i. 14. but now they are in his favour he owns them for his garden; though of small account, yet it is mine. They that in sincerity give up themselves and all they have and can do to Jesus Christ, he will do them the honour to stamp them, and what they have and do for him, with his own mark, and say, it is mine.

3. She invited him to come into his garden, and he saith, I am come, Isa. lviii. 9. Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. When Solomon prayed that God would come and take possession of the house he had built for him, he did come, his glory filled the house, 2 Chron. vii. 2. and ver. 16. he let him know that he had chosen and sanctified this house, that his name might be there for ever. They that throw open the door of their souls to Jesus Christ shall find him ready to come in to them; and in every place where he records his name he will meet his people and bless them, Exod. xx. 24.

4. She desired him to eat his pleasant fruits, to accept of the sacrifices offered in his temple, which were as the fruits of his garden, and he doth so, but finds they were not ready for eating, therefore he doth himself gather them; as the fruits are his, so is the preparation of them; he finds the heart unready for his entertainment, but doth himself draw out into exercise those gracious habits which he had planted there. What little good there is in us, would be shed and lost if he did not gather it and preserve it to himself.

5. She only desired him to eat the fruits of the garden, but he brought along with him something more, honey and wine and milk, which yield substantial nourishment, and which were the products of Canaan, Immanuel's land. Christ delights himself greatly in that which he hath both conferred upon his people and wrought in them. Or we may suppose this to have been prepared by the Spouse herself, as Esther prepared for the king her husband a banquet of wine; it is but plain fare and what is natural, honey and milk, but being kindly digested it is kindly accepted; imperfections are overlooked, the honey-comb is eaten with the honey, and the weakness of the flesh past by and hardened because the spirit is willing. When Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection he did eat with them a piece of a honey-comb, Luke xxiv. 42, 43. in which this scripture was fulfilled. He did not drink the wine only, which is liquor for men, for great men, but the milk too, which is liquor for children, little children, for he was to be the holy child Jesus that had need of milk.

6. She only invited him to come himself, but he bringing his own entertainment along with him brings his friends too and invites them to share in the provisions. The more the merrier, we say, and here where there was so much plenty there was not the worse fare. When our Lord Jesus fed five thousand at once, they did all eat and were filled. Christ invites all his friends to the wine and milk which he himself drinks of, Isa. lv. 1. to the feast of fat things and wines on the lers, Isa. xxv. 6. The great work of man's redemption and the riches of the covenant of grace are a feast to the Lord Jesus, and they ought to be so to us. The invitation is very free and hearty and loving, Eat, O friends. If Christ comes to sup with us it is we that sup with him, Rev. iii. 20. Eat, O friends. Those only that are Christ's friends are welcome to his table; his enemies, that will not have him to reign over them, have no part or lot in the matter. Drink, yea drink, abundantly. Christ in his gospel has made plentiful provision for poor souls, he filleth the hungry with good things; there is enough for all, there is enough for each, we are not straitened in him or in his grace; let us not therefore be straitened in our own bosoms, open thy mouth wide, and Christ will fill it. Be not drunk with wine; be filled with the spirit, Eph. v. 18. Those that entertain Christ must bid his friends welcome with him; Jesus and his disciples were called together to the marriage, John ii. 1. and Christ will have all his friends to rejoice with him in the day of his espousals to his church: and in token of that to feast with him. In spiritual and heavenly joys there is no danger of exceeding; there we may drink abundantly, drink of the rivers of God's pleasure, Psalm xxxvi. 8. and be abundantly satisfied, Psalm lxxv. 4.

2. ¶ I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. 3. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? 4. My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. 5. I rose up to open to my beloved, and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon

upon the handles of the lock. 6. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. 7. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. 8. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

In this Song of loves and joys we have here a very melancholy scene; the spouse here speaks not to her beloved, as before, for he is withdrawn, but of him, and it is a sad story the tells of her own folly and ill carriage towards him notwithstanding his kindness, and of the just rebukes she fell under for it; perhaps it may refer to Solomon's own apostacy from God, and the sad effects of that apostacy after God had come into his garden, had taken possession of the temple he had built, and he had feasted with God upon the sacrifice, *ver. 1.* However, it is applicable to the too common case both of churches and particular believers, who by their carelessness and security provoke Christ to withdraw from them. Observe,

1. The indisposition that the spouse was under and the listlessness that had seized her, *ver. 2.* *I sleep, but my heart wakes.* Here is, (1.) Corruption appearing in the workings of it, *I sleep;* the wife virgins slumbered. She was on her bed, chap. iii. 1. but now she sleeps: spiritual distempers, if not driven against at first, are apt to grow upon us and to get ground. She slept, i. e. pious affections cooled, she neglected her duty and grew remiss in it, she indulged herself in her ease, was secure and off her watch. This is sometimes the bad effect of more than ordinary enlargements, a good cause. St. Paul himself was in danger of being pulled with abundant revelations, and of saying, *Soul, take thine ease,* which made a thorn in the flesh necessary for him to keep him from sleeping. Christ's disciples, when he was come into his garden, the garden of his agony, were heavy with sleep and could not watch with him. True Christians are not always alike lively and vigorous in religion. (2.) Grace remaining notwithstanding in the habit of it, *my heart wakes,* my own conscience reproacheth me for it, and ceaseth not to rouse me out of my sluggishness. *The spirit is willing, and after the inner man I delight in the law of God, and with my mind I serve that.* I am for the present overpowered by temptation, but all doth not go one way in me, I sleep, but it is not a dead sleep, I strive against it, it is not a sound sleep, I cannot be easy under this indisposition. Note, 1. We ought to take notice of our own spiritual slumbers and distempers, and to reflect upon it with sorrow and shame that we have fallen asleep when Christ has been nigh us in his garden. 2. When we are lamenting what is amiss in us, we must not overlook the good that is wrought in us and preserved alive. My heart wakes in Christ, who is dear to me as my own heart, and is my life; when I sleep he neither slumbers nor sleeps.

2. The call that Christ gave to her when she was under this indisposition, *It is the voice of my beloved,* she knew it to be so, and was soon aware of it, which was a sign that her heart was awake. Like the child Samuel he heard at the first call; but did not like him mistake the person, she knew it to be the voice of Christ. He knocks to awaken us to come and let him in; knocks by his Word and Spirit, knocks by afflictions and by our own consciences; though this be not expressly quoted, yet probably it is referred to, *Rev. ii. 20.* *Behold I stand at the door and knock.* He calls sinners into covenant with him and saints into communion with him. Those whom he loves he will not let alone in their carelessness, but will find some way or other to awaken them, to rebuke and chasten them. When we are unmindful of Christ he thinks of us and provides that our faith fail not. Peter denied Christ, but the Lord turned and looked upon him, and so brought him to himself again.

Observe how moving the call is, *Open to me, my sister, my love.* (1.) He sues for entrance, who may demand it; and knocks, who could easily knock the door down. (2.) He gives her all the kind and most endearing titles imaginable, *My sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled,* he not only gives her no hard names, nor upbraids her with unkindness in not sitting up for him; but, on the contrary, studies how to express his tender affection to her still, his loving-kindness he will not utterly take away. Those that by faith are espoused to Christ he looks upon as his sisters, his loves, his doves, and all that is dear; and, being clothed with his righteousness they are undefiled. This consideration should induce her to open to him: Christ's love to us should engage us to him, even in the most self-denying instances. *Open to me.* Can we deny entrance to such a friend? to such a guest? Shall we not converse more with one that is infinitely worthy of our acquaintance and so affectionately desirous of it, though we only can be gainers by it. (3.) He pleads distress, and begs to be admitted *sub forma pauperis*, under the character of a poor traveller that wants a lodging. *My head is wet with the dew,* with the cold drops of the night; consider what hardships I have undergone to merit for thee, which sure may merit from thee so small a kindness as this. When Christ was crowned with thorns, which no doubt fetched blood from his blessed head, then was his head *wet with the dew*; consider what a grief it is to me to be thus unkindly used, as much as it would be to a tender husband to be kept out of doors by his wife in a rainy stormy night. Do we thus requite him for his love? The slights which careless souls put upon Jesus Christ, are to him as a continual dropping in a very rainy day.

3. The excuse she made to put off her compliance with this call, *ver. 3.* *I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on again?* She is half asleep, she knows the voice of her beloved, she knows his knock, but cannot find in heart to open to him; she was undressed, and would not be at the pains to dress her again; had washed her feet, and would not have occasion to wash them again. She could not send another to open the door; (it must be our own act and deed to let Christ into our hearts) and yet she was loth to go herself; she did not say, *I will not open,* but *How shall I?* Note, Frivolous excuses are the language of prevailing slothfulness in religion; Christ calls to us to open to him, but we pretend we have no mind, or we have no strength, or we have no time, and therefore think we may be excused, as the sluggard that will not plough by reason of cold. And those who ought to watch for the Lord's coming, with their loins girt, if they ungird themselves and put off their coat, they will find it difficult to recover their former resolution, and to put it on again: it is best therefore to keep tight. Making excuses, *Luke xiv. 18.* is interpreted making light of Christ, *Matth. xxiii. 5.* and so it is. Those put a great contempt upon Christ that cannot find in their hearts to bear a cold blast for him, or get out of a warm bed.

4. The powerful influences of divine grace, by which she was made willing to rise and open to her beloved. When he could not prevail with her by persuasion, he put in his hand by the whole of the door to unlock it, as one weary of waiting, *ver. 4.* This intimates a work of the Spirit upon

her soul, by which she was of unwilling made willing, *Psal. cx. 3.* The conversion of Lydia is represented by the opening of her heart, *Acts xvi. 14.* and Christ is said to open his disciples' understandings, *Luke xxiv. 45.* He that formed the spirit of man within him knows all the avenues to it and which way to enter into it, he can find the hole of the door at which to put in his hand for the conquering of prejudices and the introducing his own doctrine and law. He has the key of David, *Rev. iii. 7.* with which he opens the door of the heart in such a way as is suited to it, as the key is fitted to the wards of the lock; in such a way as not to put a force upon its nature, but only up in its ill nature.

5. Her compliance with these methods of divine grace at last, *my bowels were moved for him.* The will was gained by a good work wrought upon the affections, *my bowels were moved for him,* as those of the two disciples were when Christ made their heart to burn within them. She was moved with compassion to her beloved, because his heart was wet with the dew. Note, Tenderness of spirit and a heart of flesh prepares the soul for the reception of Christ into it, and therefore his love to us is represented in such a way as is most affecting. Did Christ redeem us in his pity, let us in pity receive him, and those that are his for his sake, when at any time they are in distress.

This good work wrought upon her affections, raised her up, and made her ashamed of her dullness and slothfulness, *ver. 5.* *I rose up to open to my beloved;* his grace inclining her to do it, and conquering the opposition of unbelief. It was her own act and yet he wrought it in her. And now her hands dropped with merrh upon the handles of the lock. Either, 1. She found it there when she applied her hand to the lock to thrust it back: he that put in his hand by the hole of the door, left it there as an evidence that he had been there. When Christ has wrought powerfully upon a soul, he leaves a blessed sweetness in it, which is very delightful to it: with this he oiled the lock to make it go easy. Note, When we apply ourselves to our duty in the lively exercises of faith, under the influence of divine grace, we shall find it will go on much more readily and sweetly than we expected. If we will but rise up to open to Christ, we shall find the difficulty we apprehended in it strangely overcome, and shall say with Daniel, *Now let my Lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me,* *Dan. x. 19.* Or, 2. She brought it thither. Her bowels being moved for her beloved, who had stood so long in the cold and wet, when she came to open to him she prepared to anoint his head, and so to refresh and comfort him, and perhaps to prevent his catching cold; she was in such haste to meet him that she would not stay to make the usual preparation, but dipped her hand in her box of ointment, that she might readily anoint his head at his first coming in. Those that open the doors of their hearts to Christ, those everlasting doors, must meet him with the lively exercises of faith and other graces, and with these must anoint him.

5. Her sad disappointment when she did open to her beloved. And here is the most melancholy part of the story; *I opened to my beloved,* as I intended, by alas my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone; my beloved was gone, was gone, so the word is. She did not open to him at his first knock, and now she came too late, when afterwards she would have inherited this blessing. Christ will be sought while he may be found, if we slip our time we lose our passage. Note, 1. Christ justly rebukes our delays with his denials, and suspends the communications of comfort from those that are remiss and drowsy in their duty. 2. Christ's departures are matter of great grief and lamentation to believers. The royal psalmist never complains of any thing with such sorrowful accents as God's *hiding his face* from him, and *casting him off,* and *forsaking him.* The spouse here is ready to tear her hair and rend her clothes, and wrings her hands, crying, *He is gone, he is gone;* and that which cuts her to the heart is, that she may thank herself, she provoked him to withdraw. If Christ departs, it is because he takes something unkindly.

Now observe what she doth in this case, and what befel her.

1. She kills call him her beloved, being resolved, how cloudy and dark soever the day be, she will not quit her relation to him and interest in him. It is a weakness, upon every apprehension either of our own failings or of God's withdrawals, to conclude hardly as to our spiritual state. Every desertion is not despair. I will say, *Lord, I believe,* though I must say, *Lord, help my unbelief.* Though he leave me, I love him, he is mine.

2. She now remembers the words he said to her when he called her, and what impressions they made upon her, reproaching herself for her folly in not complying sooner with her convictions. *My soul failed when he spake;* his words melted me when he said, *My head is wet with the dew;* and yet, wretch that I was, I lay still and made excuses, and did not open to him. The smothering and stifling of our convictions is a thing that will be very bitter in the reflection, when God opens our eyes. Sometimes the word hath not its effects presently upon the heart, but it melts afterwards, upon second thoughts: *my soul now melted because of his words* which he had spoken before.

3. She did not go to bed again, but went in pursuit of him. *I sought him, I called him.* She might have saved herself this labour if she would but have beset her when he first called; but we cut ourselves out a great deal of work, and create ourselves a great deal of trouble, by our own slothfulness and carelessness in improving our opportunities. Yet it is her praise, that when her beloved is withdrawn she continues seeking him; her desires towards him are made more strong, and her enquiries after him more solicitous by his withdrawals. She calls him by prayer, calls after him and begs of him to return; and she doth not only pray but useth means, she seeks him in the ways wherein she used to find him.

4. Yet still she missed of him: *I could not find him, he gave no answer.* She had no evidence of his favour, no sensible comforts, but was altogether in the dark, and in doubt concerning his love towards her. Note, There are those who have a true love for Christ, and yet have not immediate answers to their prayers for his smiles; but he gives them an equivalent if he strengthens them with strength in their souls to continue seeking him, *Psal. cxxxviii. 3.* St. Paul could not prevail for the removing of the thorn in the flesh, but was answered with grace sufficient for him.

5. She was ill treated by the watchmen, they found me, they smote me, they wounded me, *ver. 7.* They took her for a lewd woman, because she went about the streets at that time of night, when they were walking their rounds, and beat her accordingly. Disconsolate saints are taken for sinners, and are censured and reproached as such. Thus Hannah, when she was praying in the bitterness of her soul, was wounded and smitten by Eli, one of the prime watchmen, when he said to her, *How long wilt thou be drunken?* so counting her a daughter of Belial, *1 Sam. i. 14, 15.* It is no new thing for those that are of the loyal loving subjects of Zion's King, to be misrepresented by the watchmen of Zion as enemies or scandals to his kingdom; they could not abate and persecute them but by putting them into an ill name. Some apply it to those ministers, who though watchmen by office, yet misapply the word to awakened consciences, and through unskillfulness or contempt of their griefs, add affliction to the afflicted, and make the hearts of the righteous sad, whom God would not have made sad, *Ezek. xiii. 22.* and scourging those who ought to be encouraged, and talking to the grief of those whom God has rewarded, *Psal. lix. 26.* Those watchmen

watchmen were bad enough that could not, or would not, assist the spouse in her enquiries after her beloved, *chap. iii. 3.* but these were much worse that hindered her with their severe and uncharitable censures, *spoke her and wounded her* with their reproaches; and though they were the *keepers of the wall of Jerusalem*, as if they had been the breakers of it, *took away her veil* from her rudely and barbarously, as if it had been only a pretence of modesty, but a cover of the contrary. They whose outward appearances are all good, and yet are avidiously condemned and run down for hypocrites, have reason to complain, as the spouse here, of the *taking away of their veil* from them.

6. When she was disabled by the abuses the watchmen gave her to prosecute her enquiry herself, she gave charge to those about her to assist her in the enquiry, *ver. 8.* *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem*, all my friends and acquaintance, *if you find my beloved*, it may be you may meet with him before I shall, *what shall ye tell him?* so some read it, *speak a good word for me*, and tell him that *I am sick of love*. Observe here, (1.) What her condition was, she loved Jesus Christ to that degree that his absence made her sick, extremely sick, she could not bear it, and she was in pain for his return as a woman in travail, as Ahab for Naboth's vineyard, which he so passionately coveted. This is a sickness which is a sign of a healthful constitution of soul and will certainly end well, a sickness that will be not death but life. It is better to be sick of love to Christ than at ease in love to the world. (2.) What course she took in this condition: she did not sink into despair and conclude she should die of her disease, but she sent after her beloved; she asked the advice of her neighbours, and begged their prayers for her that they would intercede with him on her behalf; tell him, though I was careless, and foolish, and slothful, and rose not up so soon as I should have done to open to him, yet I love him: *he knows all things*, he knows that I do; represent me to him as sincere, though in many instances coming short of my duty; may, represent me to him as an object of his pity, that he may have compassion on me and help me. She doth not bid them tell him how the watchmen had abused her, how unrighteous soever they were in it, she acknowledges that *the Lord is righteous*, and therefore bears it patiently; but tell him that I am wounded with love to him. Gracious souls are more sensible of Christ's withdrawing than of any other trouble whatsoever.

Languet amans, non languet amor.

9. ¶ What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us? 10. My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. 11. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. 12. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. 13. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. 14. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. 15. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. 16. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved; and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Here is, 1. The question which the daughters of Jerusalem put to the spouse concerning her beloved, in answer to the charge she had given them, *ver. 9.* Observe,

(1.) The respectful title they give to the spouse, *O thou fairest among women*. Our Lord Jesus makes his spouse truly amiable, not only in his eyes, but in the eyes of all the daughters of Jerusalem. The church is the most excellent society in the world; the communion of saints the best communion, and the beauty of the sanctuary a transcendent beauty; the saints are the most excellent people; holiness is the symmetry of the soul; it is its agreement with itself, it recommends itself to all that are competent judges of it, even those that have little acquaintance with Christ, as those daughters of Jerusalem were, yet cannot but see an amiable beauty like-wise that bear his image; which we should love wherever we see it, though in different dresses.

(2.) Thus they say concerning her beloved, *What is thy beloved more than another beloved?* if thou wilt have us to find him for thee, give us a mark, that we may know him when we see him.

1. Some take it for a slight question, blaming her for making such ado about him. Why shouldst thou be so passionate in enquiring after thy beloved more than others are after theirs? Why shouldst thou be so set upon him more than others that yet have a kindness for him? those that are zealous in religion, are men wondered at by such as are indifferent to it. The many careless ones laugh at the few that are solicitous and serious. What is there in him that is so very charming more than in another person? if he be gone, thou that art the *fairest among women* will soon have another with an equal flame. Note, Carnal hearts see nothing excellent or extraordinary in the Lord Jesus; in his person or offices, in his doctrine or in his favours; as if there were no more in the knowledge of Christ, and in communion with him, than in the knowledge of the world and in its conversation.

2. Others rather take it for a serious question, and by it they intended, (1.) To comfort the spouse, who they knew would recover new spirits if she did but talk awhile of her beloved; and that nothing would please her better, nor give a more powerful diversion to her grief, than to be put upon the pleasing task of describing the beauties of her beloved. (2.) To inform themselves; they had heard in general that he was excellent and glorious, but they desired to know more particularly. They wondered what moved the spouse to charge him concerning her beloved with so much vehemence and concern, and therefore conclude there must be something more in him than in another beloved, which they are willing to be convinced of. Then there begins to be some hopes of people, when they begin to enquire concerning Christ and his transcendent perfections. And sometimes the extraordinary zeal of one enquiring after Christ may be a means to provoke many, *2 Cor. ix. 2.* as the apostle by the faith of the Gentiles, would stir up the Jews to a holy emulation, *Rom. xi. 14.* See *John iv. 10.*

3. The account which the spouse gives of her beloved in answer to this question. We should always be ready to instruct and to assist those that are enquiring after Christ. Experienced Christians that are well acquainted with Christ themselves, should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him.

1. She assures them in general that he is one of incomparable perfections and unparalleled worth, *ver. 10.* Do not you know my beloved? Can the daughters of Jerusalem be ignorant of him that is in Jerusalem's crown and crowned head? Let me tell you then,

(1.) That he has every thing in him that is lovely and amiable. *My beloved is white and ruddy*, the colours that make up a complete beauty. This points not at any extraordinary beauty of his body when he should be incarnate. It was never said of the child Jesus, as of the child Moses when he was born, that he was *exceeding fair*, *Acts vii. 20.* nay, *he had no form nor comeliness*, *Isa. liii. 2.* but his divine glory and the concurrences of every thing in him as Mediator, to make him truly lovely in the eyes of those that are enlightened to discern spiritual things. In him we may behold the beauty of the Lord, he was the *holy child Jesus*; that was his fairness. If we looked upon him as made to us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, he appears in all very amiable. His love to us renders him lovely; he is white in the spotless innocency of his life, ruddy in the bloody sufferings he went through at his death. White in his glory, as God, when he was transfigured, *his raiment was white as the light*; ruddy in his assuming the nature of man, Adam, *red earth*. White in his tenderness towards his people, ruddy in his terrible appearances against his and their enemies. His complexion is a very happy composition.

(2.) That he has that loveliness in him which is not to be found in any other. He is *the chief among ten thousand*; a nonpareil for beauty; *fairer than the children of men*, than any of them, than all of them, there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him; very thing else is to be accounted lost and dung in comparison of him, *Phil. iii. 8.* *He is higher than the kings of the earth*, *Psal. lxxxix. 27.* and has obtained a more excellent name than any of the principalities and powers of the upper and lower world, *Phil. ii. 9.* *Ich. i. 4.* He is a *standard bearer among ten thousand*, so the word is, the tallest and comeliest of the company: he is himself *lifted up as an ensign*, *Isa. xi. 10.* to whom we must be gathered, and must always have an eye. And there is all the reason in the world that he should have the innermost and uppermost place in our souls, who is the *fairer of ten thousands* in himself, and the fittest of twenty thousands for us.

2. She gives a particular detail of his accomplishments, conceals not his power of comely proportion, every thing in Christ is amiable. Ten instances she here gives of his beauty, which we need not be nice in the application of, lest the wringing of them bring forth blood and prove the wrestling of them: the design in general is to shew that he is every way qualified for his undertaking, and has all that in him which may recommend him to our esteem, love, and confidence. Christ's appearance to John, *Rev. i. 13.* &c. may be compared with the description which the spouse gives of him here, the scope of both being to represent him transcendently glorious, that is, both great and gracious, made lovely in the eyes of believers, and making them happy in himself.

1. *His head is as the most fine gold*: The head of Christ is God, *1 Cor. xi. 3.* and it is promised to the saints that the Almighty shall be their gold, *Job. xxii. 25.* their defence, their treasure, much more was he so in Christ, *in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, *Col. ii. 9.* Christ's head speaks his sovereign dominion over all, and his vital influence upon his church and all its members; this is as gold, gold, the former word signifies shining gold, the latter strong solid gold; Christ's sovereignty is both beautiful and powerful. Nebuchadnezzar's monarchy is compared to a *head of gold*, *Dan. ii. 38.* because it excelled all the other monarchies, and so doth Christ's government.

2. *His locks are bushy and black*, not black as the tents of Kedar, whose blackness was their deformity, to which therefore the church compares herself, *chap. i. 5.* but black as a raven, whose blackness is his beauty. Sometimes Christ's hair is represented as white, *Rev. i. 14.* noting his eternity, that he is the *Ancient of Days*, but here as black and bushy, speaking him ever young, and that there is in him no decay, nothing that waxeth old. Every thing that belongs to Christ is amiable in the eyes of a believer, even his hair is so; it was a pity it should be wet as it was *with the dew*, and these locks *with the drops of the night*, while he waited to be gracious, *ver. 2.*

3. *His eyes are as the eyes of doves*, fair and clear, and chaste and kind, *by the rivers of waters*, which doves delight in, and in which, as in a glass, they see themselves; they are washed to make them clean, *washed with milk* to make them white, and *fitly set*, neither starting out nor sunk in. Christ is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, for they are doves eyes, *Isa. i. 13.* All believers speak with pleasure of the omniscience of Christ, as the spouse here of *his eyes*; for though it be terrible to his enemies as a *flame of fire*, *Rev. i. 14.* yet it is amiable and comfortable to his friends as *doves eyes*, for it is a witness to their integrity; *thou knowest all things*, *thou knowest that I love thee*. Blessed and holy are they that walk always under the eye of Christ.

4. *His cheeks (the ridings of the face) are as a bed of spices* raised in the gardens, which are the beauty and wealth of them, and as *sweet flowers*, or towers of sweetness. There is that in Christ's countenance which is amiable in the eyes of all the saints, in the least glimpse of him, for the cheek is but a part of the face: The half discoveries Christ makes of himself to the soul are reviving and refreshing, fragrant above the richest flowers and perfumes.

5. *His lips are like lilies*, not white like lilies, but sweet and pleasant; such are the words of his lips to all that are sanctified, *sweeter than honey*, and the honey-comb; such the kisses of his lips, all the communications of his grace: *Grace is poured into his lips*, and they that heard him wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. Never any lilies in nature dropped myrrh; but nothing in nature can fully set forth the beauty and excellency of Christ, and therefore to do it by comparison there must be a composition of images.

6. *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl*, a noted precious stone, *ver. 14.* Great men had their hands adorned with gold rings on their fingers, set with diamonds or other precious stones, but in her eye his hands themselves were as gold rings; all the instances of his power, the works of his hands, all the performances of his providence and grace, are all rich and pure, and precious as gold, as the precious onyx and the sapphire; all fitted to the purpose for which they were designed, as gold rings to the finger; and all beautiful and very becoming, as rings set with the beryl. His hands which are stretched forth, both to receive his people, and to give to them, are thus rich and comely.

7. *His bowels are as bright ivory*, for so it should be rendered, rather than his belly, for it is the same word that was used for bowels, *ver. 4.* and is often ascribed to God, as *Isa. lxiii. 15.* *Jer. xxxi. 20.* and so it notes his tender compassion and affection for his spouse, and the love he has to her even in her desolate and deserted state. His love of his is like bright ivory finely polished and richly overlaid with sapphires. The love itself is strong and firm, and the instances and circumstances of it are bright and sparkling, and add much to the inestimable value of it.

8. *His legs are as pillars of marble*, so strong, so stately, and no disgrace, no not to the sockets of fine gold upon which they are set, *ver. 15.* This speaks his stability and steadfastness, where he sets his foot he will fix it; he is able

to bear all the weight of the government that is upon his shoulders, and his legs will never fail under him; this sets forth the stateliness and magnificence of the goings of our God, our King, in his sanctuary, Psalm lxxviii. 24. and the steadiness and evenness of all his dispensations towards his people: *The waves of the Lord are equal, they are all mercy and truth, these are the pillars of marble, more lasting than the pillars of heaven.*

9. *His countenance, his port and mien, is as Lebanon, that stately hill, his aspect beautiful and charming, like the prospect of that pleasant forest or park, excellent as the cedars, which in height and strength excel other trees, and are of excellent use.* Christ is a goodly person, the more we look upon him, the more beauty we shall see in him.

10. *His mouth is most sweet, it is sweetness itself, it is sweetness, so the word is, it is pure essence, nay, it is the quintessence of all delights, ver. 16.* The words of his mouth are as a sweet to a believer, sweet as milk to babes, to whom it is agreeable, as honey to those that are grown up, Psalm cxix. 103. to whom it is delicious: The kisses of his mouth, all the tokens of his love, have a transcendent sweetness in them, and are most delightful to them who have their spiritual senses exercised: *To you that believe he is precious.*

(3.) She concludes with a full assurance both of faith and hope, and so gets the mastery of her trouble.

1. Here is a full assurance of faith concerning the complete beauty of the Lord Jesus: *He is altogether lovely.* What, should I stand to mention particulars, when throughout there is nothing amiss? She is sensible she doth him wrong in the particular description of him, and comes far short of the dignity and merit of the subject, and therefore she breaks off with this general encomium: *he is truly lovely, he is wholly so; there is nothing in him but what is amiable, and nothing amiable but what is in him; he is all desires, he has all in him that one can desire, and therefore all her desire is towards him, and she seeks him thus carefully, and cannot rest contented in the want of him. Who cannot but love him who is so lovely?*

2. Here is a full assurance of hope concerning her own interest in him. *This is my beloved, and this is my friend, and therefore wonder not that I thus long after him.* See with what a holy boldness she claims relation to him, and then with what a holy triumph she proclaims it. It is propriety that sweetens excellency. To see Christ, and not see him as ours, would be rather a torture than a happiness; but to see one that is thus lovely, and to see him as ours, is a complete satisfaction. Here is a true believer;

(1.) Giving an entire consent to Christ, *he is mine; my Lord, and my God,* John xx. 28. mine, according to the tenor of the gospel covenant; mine, in all relations bestowed upon me, to be all that to me that my poor soul stands in need of.

(2.) Taking an entire complacency in Christ. It is spoken of here with an air of triumph, this is he whom I have chosen, and to whom I have given up myself; none but Christ, none but Christ; this is he on whom my heart is, for he is my best beloved; this is he in whom I trust, and from whom I expect all good, for, *this is my friend.* Note, Those that make Christ their beloved shall have him their friend; he has been, is, and will be a special friend to all believers. He loves those that love him. And those that have him their friend have reason to glory in him, and speak of him with delight. Let others be governed by the love of the world, and seek their happiness in its friendship and favours, *this is my beloved, and this is my friend:* Others may do as they please, but this is my soul's choice, my soul's rest, my life, my joy, my all; this is he whom I desire to live and die with.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, 1. The daughters of Jerusalem, moved with the description which the church had given of Christ, enquire after him; ver. 1. 2. The church directs them where they may meet with him, ver. 2, 3. 3. Christ is now found of those that sought him, and very highly applauds the beauty of his spouse as one extremely smitten with it, ver. 4—7. preferring her before all others, ver. 8, 9. and recommending her to the love and esteem of all her neighbours, ver. 10. And lastly, acknowledging the impressions which her beauty had made upon him, and the great delight he took in it, ver. 11, 12, 13.

1. **WHITHER** is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee. 2. My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. 3. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.

Here is, 1. the enquiry which the daughters of Jerusalem made concerning Christ, ver. 1. they still continue their high thoughts of the church, and call her, as before, the *fairest among women*; for true sanctity is true beauty: And now they raise their thoughts higher concerning Christ, *Whither is thy beloved gone? that we may seek him with thee.* This would be but an indecent, unacceptable compliment, if the song were not to be understood spiritually; for love is jealous of a rival, would monopolize the beloved, and cares not that others should join in seeking him, but they that truly love Christ, are desirous that others should love him too and be joined to him; nay, the greatest instance of duty and respect that the church's children can shew to their mother, is to join with her in seeking Christ.

The daughters of Jerusalem that had asked, chap. v. 9. *What is thy beloved more than another beloved?* wondering that the spouse should be so passionately in love with him, are now of another mind, and are themselves in love with him; for, 1. The spouse had described him, and shewed them his excellencies and perfections, and therefore though they have not seen him, yet, believing, they love him. They that undervalue Christ, it is because they do not know him; when God, by his word and Spirit, discovers him to the soul, with that ray of light the fire of love to him will be kindled. 2. She had expressed her own love to him, her rest in that love, and had triumphed in it, *this is my beloved:* and that flame in her breast scattered sparks into theirs: As sinful lusts when they break out, defile many. 3. The pious zeal of some may provoke many, 2 Cor. ix. 2.

The spouse had bespoken their help in seeking her beloved, chap. v. 8. but now they beg hers, for they perceive that now the cloud she had been under began to scatter, and the sky to clear up, and, while she was describing her beloved to them, she herself retrieved her comfort in him. Drooping Christians would find benefit themselves by talking of Christ, as well as do good to others.

Now here, 1. They enquire concerning him, *Whither is thy beloved gone?* which way must we steer our course in pursuit of him? Note, Those that

are made acquainted with the excellencies of Christ, and the comfort of an interest in him, cannot but be inquisitive after him; and desirous to know where they may meet with him. 2. They offer their service to the spouse to accompany her in quest of him, *we will seek him with thee.* Those that would find Christ must seek him, seek him early, seek him diligently; and it is best seeking Christ in concert, to join with those that are seeking him. We must seek for communion with Christ in communion with saints. We know *whither our beloved is gone*, he is gone to heaven, to his Father, and our Father, he took care to send us notice of it, that we might know how to direct to him, John xx. 17. We must by faith see him there, and by prayer seek him there; with boldness enter into the holiest, and herein must join with the generation of them that seek him, Psalm xxiv. 6. even with *all that in every place call upon him*, 1 Cor. i. 2. We must pray with and for others.

2. The answer which the spouse gave to this enquiry, ver. 2, 3. Now she complains not any more, as she had done, chap. v. 6. he is gone, he is gone, that she knew not where to find him, or doubted she had lost him for ever; no, (1.) Now she knows very well where he is, ver. 2. *My beloved is not to be found in the streets of the city, and the crowd and noise that is there, there I have in vain looked for him, as his parents sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, and found him not; but he is gone down to his garden, a place of privacy and retirement; the more we withdraw from the hurry of the world, the more likely we are to have acquaintance with Christ, who took his disciples into a garden, there to be witness of the agonies of his love.* Christ's church is a garden inclosed, and separated from the open common of the world; it is *his garden* which he hath planted; as he did the garden of Eden, which he takes care of and delights in: Though he is gone up to paradise above, yet he comes down to his garden on earth; it lies low, but he condescends to visit it, and wonderful condescension it is. Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Those that would find Christ, may expect to meet with him in *his garden* the church, for *there he records his name*, Exod. xx. 24. they must attend upon him in the ordinances which he hath instituted, the word, sacraments, and prayer, wherein he will be with us *always, even to the end of the world.* The spouse here refers to what Christ had said, chap. v. *I am come into my garden, q. d. what a fool was I to fret and teaze myself in seeking him where he was not, when he himself had told me where he was.* Words of direction and comfort are many times out of the way when we have occasion to use them, till the blessed Spirit brings them to our remembrance; and then we wonder how we overlooked them. Christ has told us he would come into *his garden*, thither therefore we must go to seek him.

The *beds*, and lesser gardens in this greater, are the particular churches, the *synagogues of God in the land*, Psalm lxxiv. 8. the *spices* and *lilies* are particular believers, the planting of the Lord, and pleasant in his eyes. When Christ comes down to his church, it is, 1. *To feed among the gardens*, to feed his flock, which he feeds not as other shepherds in the open fields, but in his garden; so well are they provided for! Psalm xxiii. 2. *To feed his friends and entertain them;* there you may not only find him, but find his table richly furnished, and hearty welcome to it. *To feed himself, i. e. to please himself with the products of his own grace in his people; for the Lord taketh pleasure in those that fear him.* He hath many gardens, many particular churches of different sizes and shapes, but while they are his, he feeds in them all, manifests himself among them, and is well pleased with them. 2. *To gather lilies*, wherewith he is pleased to entertain and adorn himself, he picks the lilies one by one, and gathers them to himself; and there will be a general harvest of them at the great day, when he will send forth his angels to gather all his lilies, that he may be for ever glorified and admired in them.

(2.) She is very confident of her own interest in him, ver. 3. *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;* the relation is mutual, and the knot is tied, which cannot be loosed, for he feedeth among the lilies, and my communion with him is a certain token of my interest in him. She had said this before, chap. ii. 16. but, 1. Here she repeats it as that which she resolved to abide by, and which she took an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction in: she liked her choice too well to change. Our communion with God is very much maintained and kept up by the frequent renewing of our covenant with him, and rejoicing in it. 2. She had occasion to repeat it, for she had carried it unkindly to her beloved, and for her so doing he had justly withdrawn himself from her, and therefore there was occasion to take fresh hold of the covenant, which continues firm between Christ and believers, notwithstanding their failings and his frowns, Psalm lxxxix. 30—35. I have been careless and wanting in my duty, and yet *I am my beloved's:* for every transgression in the covenant doth not throw us out of covenant; he hath justly hid his face from me and denied me his comforts, and yet *my beloved is mine;* for rebukes and chastenings are not only consistent with, but flowing from covenant love. 3. When we want a full assurance of Christ's love we must live by a faithful adherence to him. Though I have not the sensible consolation I used to have, yet I will stick to this, Christ is mine, and I am his. 4. Though she had said the same before, yet now she inverts the order, and asserts his interest in her first, *I am my beloved's:* entirely devoted and dedicated to him, and then her interest in him and in his grace *my beloved is mine,* and I am happy, truly happy in him. If our own hearts can but witness for us that we are his, there is no room left to question his being ours; for the covenant never breaks on his side. 5. It is now her comfort, as it was then, that *he feedeth among lilies*, that he takes delight in his people, and converseth freely with them, as we do with those with whom we feed, and therefore though at present he be withdrawn, I shall meet with him again; *I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

4. ¶ *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.* 5. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me; thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. 6. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them. 7. As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks. 8. There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. 9. My dove, my undefiled is but one: she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her: the daughters saw her and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. 10. ¶ *Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?*

Now we must suppose Christ graciously returned to his spouse from whom he had withdrawn himself, returned to converse with her, for he speaks to her, and makes her to hear joy and gladness; returned to favour her, and had forgiven and forgotten all her unkindnesses, for he speaks very lovingly and respectfully to her.

1. He pronounceth her truly amiable, *ver. 3. Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tizrah*, a city in the tribe of Manasseh, whose name signifies pleasant or acceptable; the situation, no doubt, being very happy, and the buildings fine and uniform: *Thou art comely as Jerusalem*, a city, compact together, *Plal. cxxii. 3.* and which Solomon had built and beautified, it was the joy of the whole earth, an honour to the world (whether they thought so or no) that there was such a city in it: It was the holy city, and that was the greatest beauty of it; and fitly is the church compared to it, for it was figured and typified by it. The gospel church is the Jerusalem that is above, *Gal. iv. 26. the heavenly Jerusalem*, *Heb. xii. 22.* in it God hath his sanctuary, and is in a special manner present; thence he has the tribute of praise issuing, it is his rest for ever, and therefore it is *comely as Jerusalem*, and being so is terrible as an army with banners. Church censures duly administered strike an awe upon men's consciences: the word, the weapons of her warfare, *cast down imaginations*, *2 Cor. x. 5.* and even an unbeliever is convinced and judged by the solemnity of holy ordinances, *1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.* The saints by faith overcome the world, *1 John v. 4.* nay, like Jacob, they have power with God and prevail, *Gen. xxxii. 28.*

2. He owns himself in love with her, *ver. 5.* Though for a small moment, and in a little wrath, he had hid his face from her, yet now he gathers her with very surprising instances of everlasting loving-kindness, *16. iv. 8. Turn thine eyes towards me*, so some read it; turn the eyes of faith and love towards me, for they have lifted me up; looked upon me and are comforted. When we are calling to God to turn the eye of his favour towards us, he is calling to us to turn the eye of our obedience towards him. We read it as a strange expression of love, *Turn away thine eyes from me*, for I cannot bear the brightness of them, they have quite overcome me, and I am prevailed with to overlook all that is past; as God said to Moses, when he interceded for Israel, *Let me alone*, or I must yield, *Exod. xxxii. 10.* Christ is pleased to borrow these expressions of a passionate lover, only to express the tenderness of a compassionate Redeemer, and the delight he takes in his redeemed, and in the workings of his own grace in them.

3. He repeats, almost word for word, part of the description he had given of her beauty, *chap. iv. 1, 2, 3.* her hair, her teeth, her temples, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* not because he could not have described it in other words and by other similitudes, but to shew that he had still the same esteem of her since her unkindness to him, and his withdrawing from her, that he had before; lest she should think that though he would not quite cast her off, yet he would think the worse of her while he knew her, he saith the same of her now that he had done, for those to whom much is forgiven, will love the more, and consequently will be the more beloved, for Christ has said, *I love those that love me*: He is pleased with his people, notwithstanding their weaknesses, when they sincerely repent of them and return to their duty, and commends them as if they were already arrived to perfection.

4. He prefers her before all competitors, and sees all the beauties and perfections of others meeting and centering in her, *ver. 8, 9.* There are, it may be, *threescore queens*, that, like Esther, have by their beauty attained to the royal state and dignity, and *four score concubines*, that kings have preferred before their own queens as more charming, and these attended by their maids of honour, *virgins without number*, that, when there is a ball at court, appear in great splendor, with beauty that dazzles the eyes of the spectators, but my dove, my undefiled is but one, an holy one.

1. She excels them all. Go through all the world, and view the societies of men that reckon themselves wise and happy, kingdoms, courts, families, councils, or whatever incorporations you may think valuable, they are none of them to be compared with the church of Christ; their honours and beauties are nothing to her's, *Who is like unto thee, O Israel*, *Deut. xxxii. 29.*—*iv. 6, 7.* There are particular persons, as *virgins without number*, that are famed for their accomplishments, the beauties of their address, language, and performances, but the beauty of holiness is beyond all other beauty; my dove, my undefiled is one, hath that one beauty, that she is a dove, an undefiled dove, and mine, and that makes her excel the queens and virgins, though they were never so many.

(2.) She includes them all. Other kings have many queens and concubines and virgins, with whose conversation they entertain themselves, but my dove, my undefiled, is to me instead of all; in that one I have more than they have in all theirs. Or, though there be many particular churches, some of great dignity, others of less, some of longer, others of shorter standing, and many particular believers of different gifts and attainments, some more eminent, others less so, yet they all constitute but one Catholic church, are all but parts of that whole, and that is my dove, my undefiled. Christ is the center of the church's unity; all the children of God that are scattered abroad are gathered by him, *John xi. 52.* and meet in him, *Eph. i. 10.* and are all his doves.

5. He shews how much she was esteemed, not by him only, but by all that had acquaintance with her, and stood in relation to her. It would add to her praise to say, 1. That she was her mother's darling; she had that in her from a child which recommended her to the particular affection of her parents; as Solomon himself is said to have been tender, and an only one in the sight of his mother, *Prov. iv. 3.* so was she the only one of her mother, as dear as if she had been an only one; and if there were many more, yet she was the choice one of her that bear her; more excellent than all the societies of men this world ever produced: All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, are nothing in Christ's account, compared with the church, which is made up of the excellent ones of the earth, the precious sons of Zion, compared to fine gold, and more excellent than their neighbours.

2. That she was admired by all her acquaintance, not only the daughters that were her juniors, but even the queens and the concubines, who might have reason to be jealous of her as a rival, they all blessed her and wished well to her, praised her and spoke well of her; the daughters of Jerusalem called her the fairest among women; all agreed to give her the pre-eminence for beauty, and every thief bowed to hers. Note, 1. Those that have any sense of things, cannot but be convinced in their consciences (whatever then say) that godly people are excellent people: many will give them their good word, and more their good-will. 2. Jesus Christ takes notice what people think and speak of his church, and is well pleased with them that honour such as fear the Lord, and takes it ill of those that do despise them, particularly when they are under a cloud, that offend any of his little ones.

6. He produceth the encomium that was given of her, and makes it his own, *ver. 10.* Who is she that looks forth as the morning? This is applicable both to the church in the world and to grace in the heart.

(1.) They are amiable as the light, the most beautiful of all visible things; Christians are, or should be, the lights of the world. The patriarchal church looked forth as the morning, from the promise of the Messiah was first made known, and the day-spring from on high visited this dark world. The Jewish church was fair as the moon; the ceremonial way as an imper-

fect light, it shone by reflection, it was changing as the moon, did not make day, nor was the sun of righteousness yet risen; but the Christian church is clear as the sun, exhibits a great light to them that sit in darkness. Or, we may apply it to the kingdom of grace, the gospel kingdom. 1. In its rise it looks forth as the morning after a dark night; it is discovering, *Job xxxviii. 12, 13.* and very acceptable, looks forth pleasantly as a clear morning; but it is small in its beginnings, and scarce perceptible at first. 2. It is at the best in this world but fair as the moon, which shines with a borrowed light, which has her changes and eclipses, and her spots too, and, when at the full, doth but rule by night. But, 3. When it is perfected in the kingdom of glory, then it will be clear as the sun, the church clothed with the sun, with Christ the sun of righteousness, *Rev. xii. 1.* They that love God will then be as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, *Judges v. 31. Matt. xiii. 43.* they shall shine in inexpressible glory, and that which is perfect will then come; there shall be no darkness, no spots, *1 Jn. xxx. 26.*

(2.) The beauty of the church and of believers, is not only amiable, but awful as an army with banners. The church in this world is as an army, as the camp of Israel in the wilderness; its state is militant; it is in the midst of enemies, and is engaged in a constant conflict with them: Believers are soldiers in this army. It has its banners; the gospel of Christ is an ensign, *1 Jn. xi. 12.* the love of Christ, *1 Jn. ii. 4.* It is marshalled and kept in order, and under discipline; it is terrible to its enemies, as Israel in the wilderness was, *Exod. xv. 14.* When Balaam saw Israel encamped according to their tribes, by their standards, colours displayed, he said, *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!* *Numb. xx v. 5.* When the church preserves her purity, she secures her honour and victory; when she is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, she is truly great and formidable.

11. I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. 12. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. 13. Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee? what will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies.

Christ being now returned to his spouse, and the breach being entirely made up, and the falling out of these lovers being the renewing of love, Christ here gives an account both of the distance and of the reconciliation.

1. That when he was withdrawn from his church as his spouse, and did not comfort her, yet even then he had his eye upon it as his garden, which he did take care of, *ver. 11. I went down into the garden of nuts or nutmegs, to see the fruits of the valley*, with complacency and concern, to see them as my own. When he was out of sight he was no further off than the garden, hid among the trees of the garden, in a low and dark valley; but then he was observing how the vine flourished, that he might do all that to it which was necessary to promote its flourishing, and might delight himself in it as a man doth in a fruitful garden. He went to see whether the pomegranates budded; Christ observes the first beginnings of the good work of grace in the soul, and the early buddings of devout affections and inclinations there; and is greatly well pleased with them, as we are with the blossoms of the spring.

2. That yet he could not long content himself with this, but suddenly felt a powerful, irresistible inclination in his own bosom to return to his church, as his spouse, being moved with her lamentations after him, and her languishing desires towards him, *ver. 12. Or, ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib*; I could not any longer keep at a distance, my repentings were kindled together, and I presently resolved to fly back to the arms of my love, my dove. Thus Joseph made himself strange to his brethren for a while, to chastise them for their former unkindnesses, and make trial of their present temper, till he could no longer restrain himself, but, or ever he was aware, burst out into tears, and said, *I am Joseph*, *Gen. xiv. 1—3.* And now the spouse perceives, as David did, *Psal. xxxi. 22.* that though she said in her haste, *he was cut off from before his eyes*, yet at the same time he heard the voice of her supplications, and became like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, which were noted for their beauty and swiftness. My soul put me in the chariots of my willing people, so some read it; the chariots of their faith, and hope, and love, their desires and prayers and expectation, which they sent after me to fetch me back, as chariots of fire with horses of fire. Note, 1. Christ's people are, and ought to be, a willing people. 2. If they continue seeking Christ, and longing after him, even when he seems to withdraw from them, he will graciously return to them in due time, perhaps sooner than they think, and with a pleasing surprise. No chariots sent for Christ shall return empty. 3. All Christ's gracious returns to his people take rise from himself: It is not they but his own soul that puts him in the chariots of his people; for he is gracious because he will be gracious, and loves his Israel because he would love them: Not for their sakes be it known to them.

3. That he being returned to her, kindly courted her return to him, notwithstanding the discouragements she laboured under. Let her not despair of obtaining as much comfort as ever she had before this distance happened, but take the comfort of the return of her beloved, *ver. 13.* Here,

(1.) The church is called the Shulamite, referring either to Solomon, the bridegroom in type, by whose name she is called, in token of her relation to him and union with him; thus believers are called Christians from Christ; or referring to Salem, the place of her birth and residence, as the woman of Shunem is called the Shunamite; heaven is the Salem whence the saints have their birth, and where they have their citizenship; those that belong to Christ are bound for heaven, shall be called Shulamites.

(2.) She is invited to return, and the invitation most earnestly pressed, *Return, return*; and again, *return, return*; recover the peace thou hast lost and forfeited, come back to thy former comfortedness and cheerfulness of spirit. Note, Good Christians, after they have had their comfort disturbed, are sometimes hardly pacified, and need to be earnestly persuaded to return again to their rest: as revolting sinners have need to be called to again and again, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?* so disquieted saints have need to be called to again and again, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye droop? why art thou cast down, O my soul?*

(3.) Being returned, she is desired to shew her face, that we may look upon thee: Go no longer with thy face covered like a mourner; let those that have made their peace with God lift up their faces without spot, *Job xxii. 26.* let them come boldly to his throne of grace; Christ is pleased with cheerfulness and humble confidence of his people, and would have them look pleasant. Let us look upon thee, not I only, but the holy angels, who rejoice in the consolations of saints, as well as in the conversion of sinners; not I only, but all the daughters: Christ and believers are pleased with the beauty of the church.

to bear all the weight of the government that is upon his shoulders, and his legs will never fail under him; this sets forth the stateliness and magnificence of the gospels of our God, our King, in his sanctuary, Psalm lxxviii. 24. and the steadiness and evenness of all his dispensations towards his people: *The ways of the Lord are equal, they are all mercy and truth, these are the pillars of mercy, more lasting than the pillars of heaven.*

9. His countenance, his port and mien, is as Lebanon, that stately hill, his aspect beautiful and charming, like the prospect of that pleasant forest or park, excellent as the cedars, which in height and strength excel other trees, and are of excellent use. Christ is a goodly person, the more we look upon him, the more beauty we shall see in him.

10. His mouth is most sweet, it is sweetness itself, it is sweetness, so the word is, it is pure essence, nay, it is the quintessence of all delights, ver. 16. The words of his mouth are as sweet to a believer, sweet as milk to babes, to whom it is agreeable, as honey to those that are grown up, Psalm cxix. 103. to whom it is delicious: The kisses of his mouth, all the tokens of his love, have a transcendent sweetness in them, and are most delightful to them who have their spiritual senses exercised: *To you that believe he is precious.*

(3.) She concludes with a full assurance both of faith and hope, and so gets the mastery of her trouble.

1. Here is a full assurance of faith concerning the complete beauty of the Lord Jesus: *He is altogether lovely.* What, should I stand to mention particulars, when throughout there is nothing amiss? She is sensible she doth him wrong in the particular description of him, and comes far short of the dignity and merit of the subject, and therefore she breaks off with this general encomium: *he is truly lovely, he is wholly so; there is nothing in him but what is amiable, and nothing amiable but what is in him; he is all desires, he has all in him that one can desire, and therefore all her desire is towards him, and she seeks him thus carefully, and cannot rest contented in the want of him. Who cannot but love him who is so lovely?*

2. Here is a full assurance of hope concerning her own interest in him. *This is my beloved, and this is my friend,* and therefore wonder not that I thus long after him. See with what a holy boldness she claims relation to him, and then with what a holy triumph she proclaims it. It is propriety that sweetens excellency. To see Christ, and not see him as ours, would be rather a torture than a happiness; but to see one that is thus lovely, and to see him as ours, is a complete satisfaction. Here is a true believer,

(1.) Giving an entire consent to Christ, *he is mine; my Lord, and my God,* John xx. 28. mine, according to the tenor of the gospel covenant; mine, in all relations bestowed upon me, to be all that to me that my poor soul stands in need of.

(2.) Taking an entire complacency in Christ. It is spoken of here with an air of triumph, this is he whom I have chosen, and to whom I have given up myself; none but Christ, none but Christ; this is he on whom my heart is, for he is my best beloved; this is he in whom I trust, and from whom I expect all good, for, *this is my friend.* Note, Those that make Christ their beloved shall have him their friend; he has been, is, and will be a special friend to all believers. He loves those that love him. And those that have him their friend have reason to glory in him, and speak of him with delight. Let others be governed by the love of the world, and seek their happiness in its friendship and favours, *this is my beloved, and this is my friend:* Others may do as they please, but this is my soul's choice, my soul's rest, my life, my joy, my all; this is he whom I desire to live and die with.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter, 1. The daughters of Jerusalem, moved with the description which the church had given of Christ, enquire after him; ver. 1. 2. The church directs them where they may meet with him, ver. 2, 3. 3. Christ is now found of those that sought him, and very highly applauds the beauty of his spouse as one extremely smitten with it, ver. 4—7. preferring her before all others, ver. 8, 9. and recommending her to the love and esteem of all her neighbours, ver. 10. And lastly, acknowledging the impressions which her beauty had made upon him, and the great delight he took in it, ver. 11, 12, 13.

1. **W**HITHER is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee. 2. My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. 3. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.

Here is, 1. the enquiry which the daughters of Jerusalem made concerning Christ, ver. 1. they still continue their high thoughts of the church, and call her, as before, the *fairest among women*; for true sanctity is true beauty: And now they raise their thoughts higher concerning Christ, *Whither is thy beloved gone? that we may seek him with thee.* This would be but an indecent, unacceptable compliment, if the song were not to be understood spiritually; for love is jealous of a rival, would monopolize the beloved, and cares not that others should join in seeking him, but they that truly love Christ, are desirous that others should love him too and be joined to him; nay, the greatest instance of duty and respect that the church's children can shew to their mother, is to join with her in seeking Christ.

The daughters of Jerusalem that had asked, chap. v. 9. *What is thy beloved more than another beloved?* wondering that the spouse should be so passionately in love with him, are now of another mind, and are themselves in love with him; for, 1. The spouse had described him, and shewed them his excellencies and perfections, and therefore though they have not seen him, yet, believing, they love him. They that undervalue Christ, it is because they do not know him; when God, by his word and Spirit, discovers him to the soul, with that ray of light the fire of love to him will be kindled. 2. She had expressed her own love to him, her rest in that love, and had triumphed in it, *this is my beloved:* and that flame in her breast scattered sparks into theirs: As sinful lutes when they break out, defile many. So the pious zeal of some may provoke many, 2 Cor. ix. 2.

The spouse had bespoken their help in seeking her beloved, chap. v. 8. but now they beg hers, for they perceive that now the cloud she had been under began to scatter, and the sky to clear up, and, while she was describing her beloved to them, she herself retrieved her comfort in him, Drooping Christians would find benefit themselves by talking of Christ, as well as do good to others.

Now here, 1. They enquire concerning him, *Whither is thy beloved gone?* which way must we steer our course in pursuit of him? Note, Those that

are made acquainted with the excellencies of Christ, and the comfort of an interest in him, cannot but be inquisitive after him, and desirous to know where they may meet with him. 2. They offer their service to the spouse to accompany her in quest of him, *we will seek him with thee.* Those that would find Christ must seek him, seek him early, seek him diligently; and it is best seeking Christ in concert, to join with those that are seeking him. We must seek for communion with Christ in communion with saints. We know *whither our beloved is gone*, he is gone to heaven, to his Father, and our Father, he took care to send us notice of it, that we might know how to direct to him, John xx. 17. We must by faith see him there, and by prayer seek him there; with boldness enter into the holiest, and herein must join with the generation of them that seek him. Psalm xxiv. 6. *even with all that in every place call upon him,* 1 Cor. i. 2. We must pray with and for others.

2. The answer which the spouse gave to this enquiry, ver. 2, 3. Now she complains not any more, as she had done, chap. v. 6. he is gone, he is gone, that she knew not where to find him, or doubted she had lost him for ever; no, (1.) Now she knows very well where he is, ver. 2. *My beloved is not to be found in the streets of the city, and the crowd and noise that is there, there I have in vain looked for him, as his parents sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, and found him not, but he is gone down to his garden,* a place of privacy and retirement; the more we withdraw from the hurry of the world, the more likely we are to have acquaintance with Christ, who took his disciples into a garden, there to be witnesses of the agonies of his love. Christ's church is a garden inclosed, and separated from the open common of the world; it is *his garden* which he hath planted, as he did the garden of Eden, which he takes care of and delights in: Though he is gone up to paradise above, yet he comes down to his garden on earth; it lies low, but he condescends to visit it, and wonderful condescension it is. Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Those that would find Christ, may expect to meet with him in *his garden* the church, for *there he records his name*, Exod. xx. 24. they must attend upon him in the ordinances which he hath instituted, the word, sacraments, and prayer, wherein he will be with us *always, even to the end of the world.* The spouse here refers to what Christ had said, chap. v. *I am come into my garden,* q. d. what a fool was I to fret and tell myself in seeking him where he was not, when he himself had told me where he was. Words of direction and comfort are many times out of the way when we have occasion to use them, till the blessed Spirit brings them to our remembrance, and then we wonder how we overlooked them. Christ has told us he would come into *his garden*, thither therefore we must go to seek him.

The beds, and lesser gardens in this greater, are the particular churches, the synagogues of God in the land, Psalm lxxiv. 8. the *spices* and *lilies* are particular believers, the planting of the Lord, and pleasant in his eyes. When Christ comes down to his church, it is, 1. *To feed among the gardens,* to feed his flock, which he feeds not as other shepherds in the open fields, but in his garden; so well are they provided for! Psalm xxiii. 2. *To feed his friends and entertain them;* there you may not only find him, but find his table richly furnished, and hearty welcome to it. *To feed himself,* i. e. to please himself with the products of his own grace in his people; *for the Lord taketh pleasure in those that fear him.* He hath many gardens, many particular churches of different sizes and shapes, but while they are his, he feeds in them all, manifests himself among them, and is well pleased with them. 2. *To gather lilies,* wherewith he is pleased to entertain and adorn himself, he picks the lilies one by one, and gathers them to himself; and there will be a general harvest of them at the great day, when he will send forth his angels to gather all his lilies, that he may be for ever glorified and admired in them.

(2.) She is very confident of her own interest in him, ver. 3. *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;* the relation is mutual, and the knot is tied, which cannot be loosed, for *he feedeth among the lilies,* and my communion with him is a certain token of my interest in him. She had said this before, chap. ii. 16. but, 1. Here she repeats it as that which she resolved to abide by, and which she took an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction in; she liked her choice too well to change. Our communion with God is very much maintained and kept up by the frequent renewing of our covenant with him, and rejoicing in it. 2. She had occasion to repeat it, for she had carried it unkindly to her beloved, and for her so doing he had justly withdrawn himself from her, and therefore there was occasion to take fresh hold of the covenant, which continues firm between Christ and believers, notwithstanding their failings and his frowns, Psalm lxxxix. 30—35. I have been careless and wanting in my duty, and yet *I am my beloved's:* for ever, transgression in the covenant doth not throw us out of covenant; he hath justly hid his face from me and denied me his comforts, and yet *my beloved is mine;* for rebukes and chastenings are not only consistent with, but flowing from covenant love. 3. When we want a full assurance of Christ's love we must live by a faithful adherence to him. Though I have not the sensible consolation I used to have, yet I will stick to this; Christ is mine, and I am his. 4. Though she had said the same before, yet now she inverts the order, and asserts his interest in her first, *I am my beloved's:* entirely devoted and dedicated to him, and then her interest in him and in his grace can but witness for us that we are his, there is no room left to question his being ours; for the covenant never breaks on his side. 5. It is now her comfort, as it was then, that *he feedeth among lilies,* that he takes delight in his people, and converseth freely with them, as we do with those with whom we feed; and therefore though at present he be withdrawn, I shall meet with him again; *I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

4. ¶ *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.* 5. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. 6. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them. 7. As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks. 8. There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. 9. My dove, my undefiled is but one: she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her: the daughters saw her and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. 10. ¶ *Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?*

Now we must suppose Christ graciously returned to his spouse from whom he had withdrawn himself, returned to converse with her, for he speaks to her, and makes her to hear joy and gladness; returned to favour her, and had forgiven and forgotten all her unkindnesses, for he speaks very lovingly and respectfully to her.

1. He pronounceth her truly amiable, *ver. 3. Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah*, a city in the tribe of Manasseh, whose name signifies pleasant or acceptable; the situation, no doubt, being very happy, and the buildings fine and uniform: *Thou art comely as Jerusalem*, a city, *compact together*, Psal. cxxii. 3. and which Solomon had built and beautified, it was the joy of the whole earth, an honour to the world (whether they thought so or no) that there was such a city in it: It was the holy city, and that was the greatest beauty of it; and fitly is the church compared to it, for it was figured and typified by it. The gospel church is the Jerusalem that is above, Gal. iv. 26. the heavenly Jerusalem, Heb. xii. 22. in it God hath his sanctuary, and is in a special manner present, thence he has the tribute of praise issuing, it is his rest for ever, and therefore it is *comely as Jerusalem*, and being so is terrible as an army with banners. Church censures duly administered strike an awe upon men's consciences: the word, the weapons of her warfare, cast down imaginations, 2 Cor. x. 5. and even an unbeliever is convinced and judged by the solemnity of holy ordinances, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. The saints by faith overcome the world, 1 John v. 4. nay, like Jacob, they have power with God and prevail, Gen. xxxii. 25.

2. He owns himself in love with her, *ver. 5. Though for a small moment, and in a little wrath, he had hid his face from her, yet now he gathers her with very surprising instances of everlasting loving-kindness*, Isa. liv. 8. *Turn thine eyes towards me*, so some read it; turn the eyes of faith and love towards me, for they have lifted me up; looked upon me and are comforted. When we are calling to God to turn the eye of his favour towards us, he is calling to us to turn the eye of our obedience towards him. We read it as a strange expression of love, *Turn away thine eyes from me*, for I cannot bear the brightness of them, they have quite overcome me, and I am prevailed with to overlook all that is past; as God said to Moses, when he interceded for Israel, *Let me alone*, or I must yield, Exod. xxxii. 10. Christ is pleased to borrow these expressions of a passionate lover, only to express the tenderness of a compassionate Redeemer, and the delight he takes in his redeemed, and in the workings of his own grace in them.

3. He repeats, almost word for word, part of the description he had given of her beauty, *chap. iv. 1, 2, 3. her hair, her teeth, her temples*, *ver. 5, 6, 7. not* because he could not have described it in other words and by other similitudes, but to shew that he had still the same esteem of her since her unkindness to him, and his withdrawing from her, that he had before; lest he should think that though he would not quite cast her off, yet he would think the worse of her while he knew her, he saith the same of her now that he had done, *for those to whom much is forgiven, will love the more*, and consequently will be the more beloved, for Christ has said, *I love those that love me*: He is pleased with his people, notwithstanding their weaknesses, when they sincerely repent of them and return to their duty, and commends them as if they were already arrived to perfection.

4. He prefers her before all competitors, and sees all the beauties and perfections of others meeting and centering in her, *ver. 8, 9. There are, at may be, threescore queens*, that, like Esther, have by their beauty attained to the royal state and dignity, *and fourscore concubines*, that kings have preferred before their own queens as more charming, and these attended by their maids of honour, *virgins without number*, that, when there is a ball at court, appear in great splendor, with beauty that dazzles the eyes of the spectators, but *my dove, my undefiled is but one*, an holy one.

1. She excels them all. Go through all the world, and view the societies of men that reckon themselves wife and happy, kingdoms, courts, societies, councils, or whatever incorporations you may think valuable, they are none of them to be compared with the church of Christ; their honours and beauties are nothing to her's, *Who is like unto thee, O Israel*, Deut. xxxii. 29.—iv. 6, 7. There are particular persons, as *virgins without number*, that are famed for their accomplishments, the beauties of their address, language, and performances, but the beauty of holiness is beyond all other beauty; *my dove, my undefiled is one*, hath that one beauty, that she is a dove, an undefiled dove, and mine, and that makes her excel the queens and virgins, though they were never so many.

(2.) She includes them all. Other kings have many queens and concubines and virgins, with whose conversation they entertain themselves, but *my dove, my undefiled*, is to me instead of all; in that one I have more than they have in all theirs. Or, though there be many particular churches, some of great dignity, others of less, some of longer, others of shorter standing, and many particular believers of different gifts and attainments, some more eminent, others less so, yet they all constitute but one Catholic church, are all but parts of that whole, and that is *my dove, my undefiled*. Christ is the center of the church's unity; all the children of God that are scattered abroad are gathered by him, John xi. 52. and meet in him, Eph. i. 10. and are all his doves.

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6. He produceth the encomium that was given of her, and makes it his own, *ver. 10. Who is she that looks forth as the morning?* This is applicable both to the church in the world and to grace in the heart.

(1.) They are amiable as the light, the most beautiful of all visible things; Christians are, or should be, the lights of the world. The patriarchal church looked forth as the morning, when the promise of the Messiah was first made known, and the day-spring from on high visited this dark world. The Jewish church was fair as the moon; the ceremonial way as an imper-

fect light, it shone by reflection, it was changing as the moon, did not make day, nor was the sun of righteousness yet risen; but the Christian church is clear as the sun, exhibits a great light to them that sit in darkness. Or, we may apply it to the kingdom of grace, the gospel kingdom. 1. In its rise it looks forth as the morning after a dark night; it is dawning, Job xxxviii. 12, 13. and very acceptable, looks forth pleasantly as a clear morning; but it is small in its beginnings, and scarce perceptible at first. 2. It is at the best in this world but fair as the moon, which shines with a borrowed light, which has her changes and eclipses, and her spots too, and, when at the full, doth but rule by night. But, 3. When it is perfected in the kingdom of glory, then it will be clear as the sun, the church clothed with the sun, with Christ the sun of righteousness, Rev. xii. 1. They that love God will then be as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, Judges v. 31. Matt. xiii. 43. they shall shine in inexpressible glory, and that which is perfect will then come; there shall be no darkness, no spots, Isa. xxx. 26.

(2.) The beauty of the church and of believers, is not only amiable, but awful as an army with banners. The church in this world is as an army, as the camp of Israel in the wilderness; its state is militant; it is in the midst of enemies, and is engaged in a constant conflict with them: Believers are soldiers in this army. It has its banners; the gospel of Christ is an ensign, Isa. xi. 12. the love of Christ, Cant. ii. 4. It is marshalled and kept in order, and under discipline; it is terrible to its enemies, as Israel in the wilderness was, Exod. xv. 14. When Balaam saw Israel encamped according to their tribes, by their standards, colours displayed, he said, *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!* Num. b. xx v. 5. When the church preserves her purity, she secures her honour and victory; when she is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, she is truly great and formidable.

11. I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. 12. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. 13. Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee: what will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies.

Christ being now returned to his spouse, and the breach being entirely made up, and the fall going out of these lovers being the renewing of love, Christ here gives an account both of the distance and of the reconciliation.

1. That when he was withdrawn from his church as his spouse, and did not comfort her, yet even then he had his eye upon it as his garden, which he did take care of, *ver. 11. I went down into the garden of nuts or nutmegs, to see the fruits of the valley*, with complacency and concern, to see them as my own. When he was out of sight he was no further off than the garden, hid among the trees of the garden, in a low and dark valley; but then he was observing how the vine flourished, that he might do all that to it which was necessary to promote its flourishing, and might delight himself in it as a man doth in a fruitful garden. He went to see whether the pomegranates budded; Christ observes the first beginnings of the good work of grace in the soul, and the early buddings of devout affections and inclinations there; and is greatly well pleased with them, as we are with the blossoms of the spring.

2. That yet he could not long content himself with this, but suddenly felt a powerful, irresistible inclination in his own bosom to return to his church, as his spouse, being moved with her lamentations after him, and her languishing desires towards him, *ver. 12. Or, ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib*; I could not any longer keep at a distance, my repentings were kindled together, and I presently resolved to fly back to the arms of my love, my dove. Thus Joseph made himself strange to his brethren for a while, to chastise them for their former unkindnesses, and make trial of their present temper, till he could no longer restrain himself, but, *or ever he was aware*, burst out into tears, and said, *I am Joseph*, Gen. xiv. 1—3. And now the spouse perceives, as David did, Psalm xxxii. 22. that though she said in her haste, *she was cut off from before his eyes*, yet at the same time he heard the voice of her supplication, and became like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, which were noted for their beauty and swiftness. My soul put me in the chariots of my willing people, so some read it; the chariots of their faith, and hope, and love, their desires and prayers and exertions, which they sent after me to fetch me back, as chariots of fire with horses of fire. Note, 1. Christ's people are, and ought to be, a willing people. 2. If they continue seeking Christ, and longing after him, even when he seems to withdraw from them, he will graciously return to them in due time, perhaps sooner than they think, and with a pleasing surprise. No chariots sent for Christ shall return empty. 3. All Christ's gracious returns to his people take rise from himself: It is not they but his own soul that puts him in the chariots of his people; for he is gracious because he will be gracious, and loves his Israel because he would love them: Not for their sakes he is known to them.

3. That he being returned to her, kindly courted her return to him, notwithstanding the discouragements she laboured under. Let her not despair of obtaining as much comfort as ever she had before this distance happened, but take the comfort of the return of her beloved, *ver. 13. Here*.

(1.) The church is called the Shulamite, referring either to Solomon, the bridegroom in type, by whose name she is called, in token of her relation to him and union with him; thus believers are called Christians from Christ; or referring to Salem, the place of her birth and residence, as the woman of Shunem is called the Shunamite; heaven is the Salem whence the saints have their birth, and where they have their citizenship; those that belong to Christ are bound for heaven, shall be called Shulamites.

(2.) She is invited to return, and the invitation most earnestly pressed, *Return, return*; and again, *return, return*; recover the peace thou hast lost and forfeited, come back to thy former composure and cheerfulness of spirit. Note, Good Christians, after they have had their comfort disturbed, are sometimes hardly pacified, and need to be earnestly persuaded to return again to their rest: as revolting sinners have need to be called to again and again, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? so disquieted saints have need to be called to again and again, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye droop; why art thou cast down, O my soul?*

(3.) Being returned, she is desired to shew her face, that we may look upon thee: Go no longer with thy face covered like a mourner; let those that have made their peace with God lift up their faces without spot, Job xxii. 26. let them come boldly to his throne of grace; Christ is pleased with cheerfulness and humble confidence of his people, and would have them look pleasant. Let us look upon thee, not I only, but the holy angels, who rejoice in the consolations of saints, as well as in the conversion of sinners; not I only, but all the daughters; Christ and believers are pleased with the beauty of the church.

(4.) A short account is given of what is to be seen in her. The question is asked, *What will you see in the Shulamite?* and it is answered, *As it were the company of two armies.*

1. Some think she gives this account of herself; she is shy of appearing, unwilling to be looked upon, having, in her own account, no form or comeliness: Alas! faith she, *What will you see in the Shulamite?* nothing that is worth your looking upon; nothing but *as it were the company of two armies* actually engaged, where nothing is to be seen but blood and slaughter. The watchmen had smitten her and wounded her, and she carried in her face the marks of those wounds, looked as if she had been fighting: She had said, *chap. i. 6. Look not upon me because I am black*, here look not upon me because I am bloody. Or it may note the constant struggle that is between grace and corruption in the souls of believers; they are in them as *two armies* continually skirmishing, which makes her ashamed to shew her face.

2. Others think her beloved gives this account of her. I will tell you what you shall see in the Shulamite: you shall see as noble a sight as that of two armies, or two parts of the same army drawn out in rank and file; not only as an army of banners, but as *two armies*, with a majesty double to what was before spoken; she is as *Mahaim*, as the two hosts which Jacob saw, *Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.* an host of saints, and an host of angels ministering to them; the church militant, the church triumphant. Behold *two armies*, in both the church appears beautiful.

C H A P. VII.

In this chapter, 1. Christ the royal Bridegroom goes on to describe the beauties of his spouse, the church, in many instances, and to express his love to her, and the delight he has in her conversation, ver. 1—9. 2. The spouse, the church, expresses her great delight in him, and the desire that she had of communion and fellowship with him, ver. 10. 13. Such mutual esteem and endearment is there between Christ and believers! And what is heaven but an everlasting interchanging of loves between the holy God and holy souls!

1. **H**OW beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter? the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman. 2. Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat, set about with lilies. 3. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins. 4. Thy neck is as a tower of ivory: thine eyes like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus. 5. Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries. 6. How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! 7. This thy stature is like the palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes. 8. I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples: 9. And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine, for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep, to speak.

The title which Jesus Christ here gives to the church is new. O prince's daughter, agreeing with *Psalms xlv. 13.* where she is called the king's daughter: She is so in respect of her new birth, born from above, begotten of God, and his workmanship, bearing the image of the King of kings, and guided by his Spirit. She is so by marriage: Christ, by betrothing her to himself, though he found her mean and despicable, has made her a prince's daughter: she has a princely disposition, something in her truly noble and generous: She is daughter and heir to the prince of the kings of the earth: if children, then heirs.

Now here we have,

(1.) A large description of the beauty of the spouse, which some think is given by the virgins her companions, and that those were they who called upon her to return: it seems rather to be given by Christ himself, and that it is designed to express his love to her and delight in her as before, *chap. iv. 1, 5, 6.* and *chap. vi. 5, 6.* The similitudes are here different from what they were before, to shew that the beauty of holiness is such as nothing in nature can reach, you may still say more of it, and yet still come short of it. That commendation of the spouse, *chap. iv.* was immediately upon the espousals, *chap. iii. 11.* this here upon her return from a by-path, *chap. vi. 13.* yet this exceeds that, to shew the constancy of Christ's love to his people; he loves them to the end, since he made them precious in his sight and honourable. The spouse had described the beauty of her beloved in ten particulars, *chap. v. 11, 12.* and now he describes her in as many, for he will not be behind-hand with her in respects and endearments: Those that honour Christ he will certainly honour and make honourable. As the prophet in describing the corruptions of degenerate Israel, reckons from the foot of the foot even unto the head, *Isa. i. 6.* so here the beauties of the church are reckoned from foot to head, that, as the apostle speaks, when he is comparing the church, as here, to the natural body, *1 Cor. xii. 23.* more abundant honour might be bestowed on those parts of the body which we think to be less honourable, and which therefore lacked honour, ver. 24.

1. Her feet are here praised; the feet of Christ's ministers are beautiful in the eyes of the church, *Isa. iii. 7.* and her feet are here said to be beautiful in the eyes of Christ: *How beautiful are thy feet with shoes!* When believers, being made free from the captivity of sin, (*Acts xii. 8.*) stand fast in the liberty with which they are made free, preserve the tokens of their enfranchisement, have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and walk steadily according to the rule of the gospel, then their feet are beautiful with shoes, they tread firm, being well armed against the troubles they meet with in their way. When we rest not in good affections, but those are accompanied with sincere endeavours, and resolution, then our feet are beautiful with shoes. See *Ezek. xvi. 10.*

2. The joints of the thighs are here said to be like jewels, and those curiously wrought by a cunning workman. This is explained by *Eph. iv. 16.* and *Col. ii. 19.* where the mystical body of Christ is said to be held together by joints and hands, as the hips and knees (both which are the joints of the

thighs) serve the natural body in its strength and motion; the church is then comely in Christ's eyes, when those joints are kept firm by holy love and unity, and the communion of saints. When believers act in religion from good principles, and are steady and regular in their whole conversation, and turn themselves easily to every duty in its time and place, then the joints are like jewels.

3. The navel is here compared to a round cup or goblet, that wanteth not any of the agreeable liquor that one would wish to find in it, such as David's cup that run over, *Psalms xxiii. 5.* well shaped, and not as that miserable infant whose navel was not cut, *Ezek. xvi. 4.* The fear of the Lord is said to be health of the navel. See *Prov. iii. 8.* When the soul wanteth not that fear, then the navel wanteth not liquor.

4. The belly is like a heap of wheat in the store-chamber, which perhaps was sometimes, to make shew, adorned with flowers. The wheat is useful, the lilies beautiful; there is every thing in the church which may be to the members of that body either for use or for ornament. All the body is nourished from the belly; it notes the spiritual prosperity of a believer, and the healthy constitution of the soul, all in good plight.

5. The breasts are like two young roes that are twins, ver. 3. By the breasts of the church's consolations those are nourished who are born from its belly, (*Isai. xlv. 3.*) and by the navel received nourishment in the womb. This comparison we had before, *chap. iv. 5.*

6. The neck, which before was compared to the tower of David, *chap. iv. 4.* is here compared to a tower of ivory, so white, so precious: Such is the faith of the saints, by which they are joined to Christ their head. The name of the Lord, improved by faith, is to the saints as a strong and impregnable tower.

7. The eyes are likened to the fish-pool in Heshbon, or the artificial fish-ponds, by a gate, either of Jerusalem, or of Heshbon, which is called Bathrabbim the daughter of a multitude, because a great thoroughfare. The understanding, the intentions of a believer, are clean and clear as these ponds: The eyes weeping for sin, are as fountains, *Jer. ix. 1.* and coming with Christ.

8. The nose like the tower of Lebanon, the forehead or face set like a firm, *Isa. i. 7.* undaunted as that tower was impregnable: So it notes the unanimity and holy bravery of the church; or as others, a spiritual sagacity to discern things that differ, as animals strangely distinguished by the smell. This tower looks towards Damascus, the head city of Syria, noting the boldness of the church in facing its enemies, and not fearing them.

9. The head like Carmel, a very high hill near the sea, ver. 5. The head of a believer is lifted up above his enemies, *Psalms xvii. 6.* above the storms of the lower region, as the top of Carmel was, pointing heaven-wards. The more we get above this world, and the nearer to heaven, and the more secure and serene we become by that means, the more amiable we are in the eyes of the Lord Jesus.

10. The hair of the head is said to be like purple: It notes the universal amiableness of a believer is the eyes of Christ, even to the hair; or, as some understand it, the pins with which the hair is dressed. Some by the head and the hair understand the governors of the church, who, if they be careful to do their duty, add much to her comeliness. The head like crimson (so some read it) and the hair like purple, the two colours worn by great men. (2.) The complacency which Christ takes in his church thus beautified and adorned; she is lovely indeed, if she be so in his eyes; as he puts the comeliness upon her, so it is his love that makes this comeliness truly valuable; for he is an unexceptionable judge.

1. He delighted to look upon his church, and to converse with it, rejoicing in that habitable part of the earth; the king is held in the galleries, and cannot leave them. This is explained by *Psalms cxxxii. 13, 14.* The Lord hath chosen Zion, saying, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell.* And *Psalms cxlvii. 11.* The Lord taketh pleasure in those that fear him. And if Christ hath such delight in the galleries of communion with his people, much more reason have they to delight in them, and to reckon a day there better than a thousand.

2. He was even struck with admiration at the beauty of his church, ver. 6. How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, how thou art made fair: to the word is; not born so, but made so with the comeliness which I have put upon thee. Holiness is a beauty beyond expression: the Lord Jesus is wonderfully pleased with it; the outward aspect of it is fair, the inward disposition of it is pleasant and highly agreeable, and the complacency he has in it is expressible: O my dearest for delights, so some read it.

3. He determined to keep up communion with his church.

(1.) To take hold of her as of the boughs of a palm-tree. He compares her stature to a palm-tree, ver. 7. so straight, so strong doth she appear when she is looked upon in her full proportion: The palm-tree is observed to flourish most when it is loaded; so the church, the more it has been afflicted, the more it has multiplied; and the branches of it are emblems of victory. Christ faith, *I will go up to the palm-tree*, to entertain myself with the shadow of it, ver. 8. and *I will take hold of its boughs*, and observe the beauty of them. What Christ hath said he will do in favour of his people, we may be sure he will do, for his kind purposes are never suffered to fall to the ground; and if he take hold of the boughs of his church, take early hold of her branches, when they are young and tender, he will keep his hold and not let them go.

(2.) To refresh himself with her fruits: He compares her breasts (her pious affections towards him) to clusters of grapes a most pleasant fruit, ver. 7. and he repeats it, ver. 8. they shall be, i. e. they shall be to me as clusters of the vine, which make glad the heart: Now I come up to the palm-tree, now thy graces shall be exerted and excited; Christ's presence with his people kindles the holy, heavenly fire in their souls, and then their breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, a cordial to themselves, and acceptable to him: And since God at first breathed into man's nostril the breath of life, and the breath of the new life still, the smell of their nostrils is like the smell of apples or oranges, which is pleasing and reviving. The Lord smelled a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice, *Gen. viii. 21.* And lastly, the roof of her mouth is like the best wine, ver. 9. her spiritual taste and relish, or the words she speaks to God and man which come not from teeth outward, but from the roof of the mouth; these are pleasing to God; the prayer of the upright is his delight: And when those that fear the Lord, speak one to another as becomes them, the Lord hearkeneth, and hears with pleasure, *Mal. iii. 16.* It is like that wine which is, 1. Very palatable and grateful to the taste; it goes down sweetly, it goes straightly, so the margin reads it; it moves itself aright, *Prov. xxiii. 31.* The pleasures of sense seem right to the carnal appetite, and go down smoothly, but they are often wrong, and compared with the pleasure of communion with God, they are harsh and rough; nothing goes down so sweetly with a gracious soul, as the wine of God's consolations. 2. It is a great cordial: the presence of Christ by his Spirit with his people, shall be reviving and refreshing to them, as that strong wine which makes the lips even of those that are asleep, (i. e. that are ready to faint away in a deliquium) to speak: Unconverted sinners are asleep, saints are often drowsy, and listless, and half asleep; but the word and Spirit of Christ will put life and vigour into the soul, and out of the abundance of the heart,

heart, that is thus filled, the mouth will speak. Then the apostles were filled with the Spirit, they spake with tongues the wonderful works of God, Acts ii. 10, 12. and they who in opposition to being drunk with wine, wherein is excess, are filled with the Spirit, speak to themselves in psalm and hymns, Eph. v. 18, 19. When Christ is thus commending the sweetness of his spouse's love, excited by the manifestation of his, she seems to put in that word *for my beloved*, as in a parenthesis: Is there any thing in me that is pleasant or valuable? as it is from, so it is *for my beloved*: And then he delights in our good affections and services, when they are all for him, and devoted to his glory.

10. ¶ I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me. 11. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field: let us lodge in the villages. 12. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves. 13. The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

These are the words of the spouse, the church, the believing soul in answer to the kind expressions of Christ's love in the foregoing verses.

1. She here triumphs in her relation to Christ, and her interest in him, and in his name will she boast all the day long. With what a transport of joy and holy exultation doth she say, *ver. 10. I am my beloved's*, not my own, but entirely devoted to him, and owned by him. If we can truly say that Christ is our *best beloved*, we may be confident that we are his, and he will save us, Psal. cxix. 94. The gracious discoveries of Christ's love to us, should engage us greatly to rejoice in the hold he has of us, his sovereignty over us and propriety in us; which is no less a spring of comfort than a bond of duty. Intimacy of communion with Christ should help to clear up our interest in him.

Glorifying in this that she is his to serve him, and reckoning that her honour, she comforts herself with this, that his desire is towards her, i. e. he is her husband; it is a periphrasis of the conjugal relation, Gen. iii. 16. Christ's desire was strongly towards his chosen remnant, when he came from heaven to earth to seek and save them; and when in pursuance of his undertaking, he was even straitened till the baptism of blood he was to pass through for them, *was accomplished*, Luke xii. 50. He desires Zion for an habitation; this is a comfort to believers, that whosoever slights them, Christ has a desire towards them, such a desire as will again bring him from heaven to earth to receive them to himself; for he longs to have them all with him, John xvii. 24.—xiv. 3.

2. She humbly and earnestly desires communion with him, *ver. 11, 12. Come, my beloved*, let us take a walk together, that I may receive counsel, instruction, and comfort from thee, and may make known my wants and grievances to thee, with freedom, and without interruption. Thus Christ walked with the disciples that were going to the village called Emmaus, and talked to them till he made their hearts burn within them. Observe here,

(1.) Having received fresh tokens of his love and full assurances of her interest in him, she pressed forward towards further acquaintance with him; as blessed Paul who desired yet more and more of the *elegancy of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*, Phil. iii. 8. Christ hath made it appear how much his desire is towards us, and we are very ungrateful if ours be not towards him. Note, Communion with Christ is that which all that are sanctified earnestly breathe after; and the clearer discoveries he makes them of his love, the more earnestly do they desire it. Sensual pleasures pall the carnal appetite, and soon give it a surfeit; but spiritual delights whet the desires, whose language is, *Nothing more than God*, but still more and more of him. Christ had said, *I will go up to the palm-tree: Come, saith she, Let us go*. The promises Christ hath made us of communion with him, are not to supersede, but quicken and encourage our prayers for that communion.

(2.) She desires to go forth into the fields and villages, to have this communion with him. Those that would converse with Christ must go forth from the world, and the amusements of it, must avoid every thing that would divert the mind and be a hindrance to it when it should be wholly taken up with Christ; we must contrive how to attend upon the Lord without distraction, 1 Cor. vii. 35. for therefore the spouse here covets to get out of the noise of the town: *Let us go forth to him without the camp*, Heb. xiv. 13. Solitude and retirement befriend communion with God, therefore Isaac went out into the field to meditate and pray. Enter into thy closet and shut thy door. A believer is never less when alone than alone with Christ, where no eyes see.

(3.) Having business to go abroad to look after the grounds, she desires the company of her beloved. Note, wherever we are, we may keep up our communion with God, if it be not our own fault, for he is always at our right hand, his eye always upon us, and both his word and his ear always nigh us. By going about our worldly affairs with heavenly holy hearts, mixing pious thoughts with common actions, and having our eyes ever towards the Lord, we may take Christ along with us wherever we go. Nor should we go any whither, where we cannot in faith ask him to go along with us.

(4.) She is willing to rise betimes to go along with her beloved: *Let us go up early to the vineyards*; it intimates her care to improve opportunities of conversing with her beloved; when the time appointed is come we must lose no time, but as the woman, Mark xvi. 2. *go very early*, though it be to a sepulchre, if we be in hopes to meet him there. Those that will go abroad with Christ must begin betimes with him, early in the morning of their days, must begin every day with him; seek him early, seek him diligently.

(5.) She will be content to take up her lodging in the villages, the huts or cottages which the country people built for their shelter when they attended their business in the fields, there in these mean and cold dwellings she will gladly reside, if she may but have her beloved with her; his presence will make them fine and pleasant, and convert them into palaces. A gracious soul can reconcile itself to the poorest accommodation, if it may have communion with God in them.

(6.) The most pleasant delightful fields even in the spring time, when the country is most pleasant, yet will not satisfy her unless she have her beloved with her. No delights on earth can make a believer easy unless he enjoy God in all.

3. She desires to be better acquainted with the state of his own soul, and the present posture of its affairs, *ver. 12. Let us see if the vine flourish*. Our own souls are our vineyards; they are or should be planted with vines and pomegranates, choice and useful trees; we are made keepers of these vineyards, and therefore are concerned often to look into them, to examine the state of our own souls; to see whether the vine flourisheth, whether our graces be in act and exercise, whether we be fruitful in the fruits of righte-

ousness; and whether our fruit abound. And especially let us enquire whether the tender grape appear, and whether the pomegranates bud forth, what good motions and dispositions there are in us that are yet but young and tender, that they may be protected and cherished with a particular care, and may not be nipped or blasted, or rubbed off, but cultivated, that they may bring forth fruit unto perfection. In this enquiry into our own spiritual state, it will be good to take Christ along with us; because his presence will make the vine flourish and the tender grape appear; as the returning sun revives the gardens; and because to him we are concerned to approve ourselves; if he sees the vine flourish and the tender grape appear; if we can appeal to him, *thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*; if his spirit witness with our spirit, that our souls prosper, it is enough. And if we would be acquainted with ourselves, we must beg of him to search and try us, to help us in the search, and discover us to ourselves.

4. She promiseth to her beloved the best entertainment she can give him at her country seat; for he will come into us and sup with us, Rev. iii. 20.

(1.) She promiseth him her best affections; and whatever else she had for him it would utterly be concerned, if her heart were not entire for him; *there, there ore will I give thee my loves*; I will repeat the professions of it, honour thee with the tokens of it, and the outdoings of my soul towards thee in adorations, and desires shall be quickened and enlarged, and my heart offered up to thee in a holy fire.

(2.) She promised him her best provision, *ver. 13. There shall we find not only pleasant odours, for the mandrakes give a smell, the love flowers, or lovely ones*, so the word signifies, or the lovely fruits; it was something that was in all respects very grateful, so valuable, that Rachel and Leah had like to have fallen out about them, Gen. xxx. 14. But we shall also find that which is good for food, as well as pleasant to the eye, all the rarities that the country affords, *at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits*. Note, 1. The fruits and exercises of grace are pleasant to the Lord Jesus. Note, 2. These must be carefully laid up for him, devoted to his service and honour, must be always ready to us when we have occasion for them, as that is which is laid up at our gates; that by our bringing forth much fruit, he may be glorified, John xv. 18. Note, 3. There is a great variety of these pleasant fruits with which our souls should be well stocked; we must have all sorts of them, grace for all occasions, new and old, as the good householder has in his treasury; not only the products of this year, but remainders of the last, Matt. xiii. 52. We must not only have that ready to us for the service of Christ, which we have heard and learned, and experienced lately, but must retain that which we have formerly gathered; nor must we content ourselves only with what we have laid up in store in the days of old, but as long as we live, must be still adding something new to it, that our stock may increase, and we may be thoroughly furnished for every good work. Note, 4. Those that truly love Christ will think all they have, even their most pleasant fruits, and what they have treasured up most choicely, too little to be bestowed upon him, and he is welcome to it all: if it were more and better it should be at his service. It is all from him, and therefore it is fit it should be all for him.

C H A P. VIII.

The affections between Christ and his spouse are as strong and lively here, in this closing chapter of the song, as ever, and rather more so.

(1.) The spouse continues her importunity a more intimate communion and fellowship with him, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) She charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to interrupt her communion with her beloved, *ver. 4. and they thereupon admire her dependence on him*, *ver. 5.* (3.) She begs of her beloved, whom she raiseth up by her prayers, *ver. 6. that he would by his grace confirm that blessed union with him to which she was admitted*, *ver. 6—7.* (4.) She makes intercession for others also, that care might be taken of them, *ver. 8—9. and pleaseth herself with the thoughts of her own interest in Christ, and his affection to her*, *ver. 10.* (5.) She owns herself his tenant for a vineyard she held of him at Baalhamon, *ver. 11—12.* (6.) The song concludes with an interchanging of parting requests: Christ chargeth his spouse that she should often let him hear from her, *ver. 13. And she begs of him that he would hasten his return to her*, *ver. 11.*

1. O That thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee, yea, I should not be despised. 2. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house; who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. 3. His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. 4. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love until he please.

Here, 1. The spouse wished for a constant intimacy and freedom with the Lord Jesus. She was already betrothed to him, but the nuptials being not yet solemnized and published (the bride, the lamb's wife will not be completely ready till his second coming) she was obliged to be shy, and to keep at some distance, she therefore wished she may be taken for his sister, he having called her so, chap. v. 1. and that she might have the same chaste and innocent familiarity with him, that a sister has with a brother, an own brother that sucked the breasts of the same mother with her, who would therefore be exceeding tender of her, as Joseph was of his brother Benjamin. Some make this to be the prayer of the Old Testament saints for the hastening of Christ's incarnation, that the church might be the better acquainted with him, when *for as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood*, he should also himself likewise take part of the same, and not be ashamed to call them brethren. It is rather the wish of all believers for a more intimate communion with him, that they might receive the spirit of sanctification, and so Christ might be as their brother, i. e. they might be as his brethren, which then they are, when by grace they are made partakers of a divine nature, and he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are both of one, Heb. ii. 11, &c. It becomes brethren and sisters, the children of the same parents, that have been nursed at the same breast, to be very loving to, and tender of one another; such a love the spouse desires might be between her and her beloved, that she might call him brother.

2. She promiseth herself then the satisfaction of making a more open profession of her relation to him, than at present she could make. When I should find thee without, any where even before company, I would kiss thee as a sister doth her own brother, especially her little brother that is now sucking the breast of her mother (for so some understand it;) I would use all the decent

decent freedom with thee that could be, and *should not be despised for it*, as doing any thing unbecoming the modesty of my sex. The Church, since Christ's incarnation, can better own him than she could before; when she would be laughed at for being so much in love with one that was not yet born. Christ is become as our brother, wherever we find him, therefore let us be ready to own our relation to him, and affection for him, and not fear being despised for it, nor regard that no more than David did when he danced before the ark; *if this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile*; nay, hope that we shall not be despised so much as some imagine; *of the maid-servants, of whom thou hast spoken, I shall be had in honour*; wherever we find the image of Christ, though it be without, among those that do not follow him with us, we must love it, and testify that love, and we *shall not be despised for it*, but catholic charity will gain us respect.

3. She promiseth to improve the opportunity she should then have of cultivating an acquaintance with him, *ver. 2. I would lead thee*, as my brother, by the arm, and hang upon thee, I would shew thee all the house of my precious things, would bring thee into my mother's house, i. e. into the church, into the solemn assemblies, *chap. iii. 4. into my closet*, for there the saints have most familiar communion with Christ. *And there thou shouldst instruct me*, (so some read it) as brethren inform their sisters of what they desire to be instructed in. Those that know Christ shall be taught of him; and therefore we should desire communion with Christ, that we may receive instruction from him. He is come that he might give us an understanding: or, my mother would instruct me, when I have thee with me: It is the presence of Christ, in and with his church, that makes the word and ordinances instructive to her children, which shall all be taught of God.

4. She promiseth him to bid him welcome to the best she had, would *cause him to drink of her spiced wine, and the juice of her pomegranate*, and bid him welcome to it, wishing it better for his sake. The exercise of grace and the performance of duty is spiced wine to the Lord Jesus, very acceptable to him, as expressive of a grateful sense of his favours. Those that are pleased with Christ, must study to be pleasing to him; and they will not find him hard to be pleased. He reckons hearty welcome his best entertainment, and if he have that he will bring his entertainment along with him.

5. She doubts not but to experience his tender care of her, and affection for her, *ver. 3. that she should be supported by his power, and kept from fainting in the hardest services and sufferings, his left hand should be under my head, and that she should be comforted with his love, his right hand should embrace me*. Thus Christ laid his right hand upon John, when he was ready to die away, *Rev. i. 17.—Dan. x. 10—18.* It may be read as it is, *chap. ii. 6. his left hand is under my head*, for the words are the same in the original, and so it speaks an immediate answer to her prayer, she was answered with strength in her soul, *Psal. cxxxviii. 3.* While we are following her after Christ, his right hand sustains us, *Psal. lxxiii. 8. underneath are the everlasting arms*.

6. She chargeth those about her to take heed of doing any thing to interrupt the pleasing communion she now had with her beloved, *ver. 4. as she had done before, when he thus strengthened and comforted her with his presence, chap. ii. 7. Let me charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, and reason with you. Why should ye stir up, and why should ye awake my love until he will?* the church, our common mother, chargeth all her children that they never do any thing to provoke Christ to withdraw, which we are very prone to do. Why should you put such an affront upon him? Why should you be such enemies to yourselves? we should thus reason with ourselves when we are tempted to do that which will grieve the Spirit. What? Am I weary of Christ's presence, that I affront him; and provoke him to depart from me? Why should I do that which he will take so unkindly, and which I shall certainly repent of?

7. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth, there she brought thee forth that bare thee. 8. ¶ Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. 9. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it, if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

Here, 1. The spouse is very much admired by those about her. It comes in a parenthesis, but in it gospel-graces lies as plain and as much above ground as any where in this mystical song. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* Some make these the words of the bridegroom, expressing himself well pleased with her reliance on him, and resignation of herself to his conduct. They are rather the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she spoke, *ver. 4. they see her, and bless her; the angels in heaven and all her friends on earth are the joyful spectators of her bliss.* The Jewish church came up from the wilderness, supported by the divine power and favour, *Deut. xxxii. 10, 11.* The Christian church was raised up from a low and desolate condition by the grace of Christ relied on, *Galatians iv. 27.* Particular believers are then amiable, nay, admirable, and divine grace is to be admired in them, when by the power of divine grace they are brought up from the wilderness, leaning with a holy confidence and complacency upon Jesus Christ their beloved. This speaks the beauty of a soul, and the wonders of divine grace. (1.) In the conversion of sinners: A sinful state is a wilderness; remote from communion with God, barren and dry, and in which there is no true comfort. It is a wandering wanting state; out of this wilderness we are concerned to come up, by true repentance, in the strength of the grace of Christ, supported by our beloved and carried in his arms. (2.) In the consolation of saints. A soul convinced of sin, and truly humbled for it, is in a wilderness, quite at a loss; and there is no coming out of this wilderness, but leaning on Christ as our beloved by faith, and not leaning to our own understanding, nor trusting to any righteousness or strength of our own as sufficient for us, but going forth, and going on in the strength of the Lord God, and making mention of his righteousness, even his only, who is the Lord our righteousness. (3.) In the salvation of those that belong to Christ, We must go up from the wilderness of this world, having our conversation in heaven; and at death we must remove thither, leaning upon Christ; must live and die by faith in him; to me to live is Christ, and it is he that is gain in death.

2. She addresseth herself to her beloved,

1. She puts him in mind of the former experience which she and others had had of comfort and success in applying to him. (1.) For her own part, *I raised thee up under the apple-tree*, i. e. I have many a time wrestled

with thee by prayer, and have prevailed. When I was alone in the acts of devotion, retired in the orchard under the apple-tree, (which Christ himself was compared to, *chap. ii. 3.*) as *Nathaniel under the fig-tree*, *John i. 48.* meditating and praying, then *I raised thee up*, to help me and comfort me, as the disciples raised him up in the storm, saying, *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* *Mark iv. 38.* and the church, *Psal. xlv. 23. Awake why sleepest thou?* Note, The experience we had of Christ's readiness to yield to the importunities of our faith and prayer, should encourage us to continue instant in our addresses to him, to strive more earnestly, and not to faint: *I fought the Lord, and he heard me*, *Psal. xxxiv. 4.* (2.) Others also had had like experience of comfort in Christ, as it follows there, *Psal. xxxiv. 5. They looked unto him*, as well as I, *and were lightened*, there thy mother brought thee forth, the universal church, or believing souls, in whom Christ was formed, *Galat. iv. 15.* They were in pain for the comfort of an interest in thee, and *travailed in pain with great sorrow*, so the word here signifies. But they brought thee forth, the pangs did not continue always, they that had travailed in convictions, at last brought forth in consolation, and the pain was forgotten, for joy of the Saviour's birth: by this very similitude our Saviour illustrates the joy which his disciples would have in his return to them, after a mournful separation for a time, *John xvi. 21, 22.* After the bitter pangs of repentance, many a one has had the blessed birth of comfort; Why then may not I?

2. She begs of him that her union with him might be confirmed, and her communion with him continue and made more intimate, *ver. 6. Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm.* (1.) Let me have a place in thy heart, an interest in thy love; this is that which all those desire above any thing, they know how much their happiness is bound up in the love of Christ. (2.) Let me never loose the room I have in thy heart, let thy love to me be ensured, as that deed which is sealed, not to be revoked, that cabinet which is sealed up not to be robbed. Let nothing ever prevail either to separate me from thy love, or by suspending the communications of it to deprive me of the comfortable sense of it. (3.) Let me be always near and dear to thee, as the signet on thy right hand, not to be parted with, *Jer. xxii. 24. Engraven on the palms of my hands*, *Isa. xlix. 14.* Loved with a peculiar love. (4.) Be thou my High-priest; let my name be written on thy breast-plate, nearer thy heart, as the names of all the tribes were engraven like the engravings of a signet, in twelve precious stones on the breast-plate of Aaron, and also on two precious stones on the two shoulders, or arms of the ephod, *Exod. xxviii. 11, 12—21.* 5. Let thy power be engaged for me, as an evidence of thy love to me; let me be not only a seal upon thine heart, but a seal upon thine arm; let me be ever borne up in thine arms, and know it to my comfort. Some make these to be the words of Christ to his spouse, commanding her to be ever mindful of him, and of his love to her; however, if we desire and expect that Christ should set us as a seal on his heart, sure we cannot do less than set him as a seal on ours.

3. To enforce this petition, she pleads the power of love. of her love to him, which constrained her to be thus pressing for the tokens of his love to her.

1. Love is a violent vigorous passion, (1.) It is strong as death; the pains of a disappointment lover, are like the pains of death; nay, the pains of death are slighted, and made nothing of in pursuit of the beloved object. Christ's love to us was strong as death, for it broke through death itself, he loved us, and gave himself for us; the love of true believers to Christ is strong as death, for it makes them dead to every thing else; it even parts between soul and body, while the soul, upon the wings of devout affections, soars up to heaven and even forgets that it is yet clothed and clogged with flesh: Paul, in a rapture of this love, knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body. By it a believer is crucified to the world. (2.) Jealousy is cruel as the grave, which swallows up and devours all; those that truly love Christ, are jealous of every thing that would draw them from him, and especially jealous of themselves, lest they should do any thing to provoke him to withdraw from them, and rather than do so would pluck out a right eye and cut off a right hand, than which what can be more cruel? Weak and trembling saints, that conceive a jealousy of Christ, doubting of his love to them, find that jealousy to prey upon them like the grave; nothing waits the spirits more, but it is an evidence of the strength of their love to him. (3.) The coals thereof, its lamps, and flames, and beams, are very strong, and burn with incredible fury and irresistible force, as the coals of fire that have a most vehement flame, a flame of the Lord, (so some read it) a powerful piercing flame, as the lightning, *Psal. xix. 7.* Holy love is a fire that begets a mighty heat in the soul, and consumes the dross and chaff that is in it, melts it down like wax into a new form, and carries it upwards as the sparks towards God and heaven.

2. Love is a valiant victorious passion. Holy love is so; the reigning love of God in the soul is constant and firm, and will not be drawn off from him either by fair means or foul, by life & death, *Rom. viii. 38.*

1. Death and all its terrors will not frighten a believer from loving Christ. Many waters, though they will quench fire, cannot quench this love, no, nor the floods drown it *ver. 7.* the noise of these waters will strike no terror upon it, let them do their worst, Christ shall still be the best beloved. The overflowing of these waters will strike no damp upon it, but it will enable a man to rejoice in tribulation; *Though he slay me, I will love him, and trust in him.* No waters could quench Christ's love to us, nor any floods drown it, he waded through the greatest difficulties; even seas of blood; Love sat king upon the floods; let nothing then abate our love to him.

2. Life and all its comforts will not entice a believer from loving Christ. If a man could hire him with all the substance of his house, to take his love off from Christ, and set it upon the world and the flesh again, he would reject the proposal with the utmost disdain; as Christ, when the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them were offered him, to buy him off from his undertaking: *Get thee hence, Satan*; it would utterly be contemned, offer those things to those that know no better. Love will enable us to repel and triumph over temptations, from the smiles of the world, as much as from its frowns. Some give this sense of it; *If a man would give all the substance of his house to Christ, as an equivalent instead of love to excuse it, it would be contemned.* He seeks not ours but us; the heart, not the wealth. *If I give all my goods to feed the poor and have not love, it is nothing.* *1 Cor. xiii. 1.* Thus believers stand affected to Christ; the gifts of his providence cannot content them without the assurances of his love.

8. ¶ We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister, in the day when she shall be spoken for? 9. If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar. 10. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour. 11. Solomon had a vineyard at

at Baal-hamon, he let out the vineyard unto keepers: every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver. 12. My vineyard which is mine is before me; thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof, two hundred.

Christ and his spouse having sufficiently confirmed their love to each other, and agreed it to be on both sides as strong as death and inviolable, they are here in these verses, like a loving husband and his wife, consulting together about their affairs, and considering what they should do. Yoke-fellows having laid their hearts together, lay their heads together to contrive about their relations, and about their estates; and accordingly this happy pair are here advising with one another about a sister they had and a vineyard they had.

(1.) They are here consulting about their sister, their little sister, and the disposing of her.

1. The spouse proposeth her case with a compassionate concern, *ver. 8.* *We have a little sister and she is no breasts, she is not grown up to maturity; what shall we do for this little sister of ours in the day that she shall be spoken for, so that we may do well for her?*

(1.) This may be understood as spoken by the Jewish church concerning the Gentile world. God had espoused the church of the Jews to himself, and she was richly endowed, but what shall become of the poor Gentiles, the barren that has not borne, and the desolate? Isa. liv. 1. Their condition (say the pious Jews) is very deplorable and forlorn; they are *sisters*, children of the same fathers, God and Adam, but they are *little*, because not dignified with the knowledge of God; they have *no breasts*, no divine revelation, no scriptures, no ministers; no breasts of consolation drawn out to them, whence they might suck, being *strangers to the covenants of promise*; no breasts of instruction themselves to draw out to their children to nourish them, (1 Peter ii. 2.) *What shall we do for them?* we can but pity them, and pray for them: Lord, what wilt thou do for them? the saints in Solomon's time might know, from David's psalms, that God had mercy in store for them, and begged it might be hastened to them. Now the tables are turned, the Gentiles are betrothed to Christ, and ought to return the kindness by an equal concord for the bringing in of Jews again, our eldest sister, that once had breasts, but now has none. If we take in this sense, the unbelieving posterity of these pious Jews contradicted this prayer of their fathers; for when the day came that the Gentiles should be *spoken for* and courted to Christ, instead of considering what to do for them, they plotted to do all they could against them, which filled up the measure of their iniquity, 1 Thess. ii. 16. Or,

(2.) It may be applied to any others that belong to the election of grace but are yet uncalled; they are remotely related to Christ and his church, and sisters to them both; *other sheep that are not of this fold*, John x. 16 — Acts xviii. 10. They have *no breasts*, none yet fashioned, *Ezek. xvi. 7.* no affection to Christ, no principle of grace. *The day will come when they shall be spoken for*; when the chosen shall be called, shall be courted for Christ by the ministers, the friends of the Bridegroom: a blessed day it will be, a day of visitation! What shall we do in that day to promote the match? to conquer their coyneis, and persuade them to consent to Christ, and present themselves chaste virgins to him? Note, Those that through grace are brought to Christ themselves, should contrive what they may do to help others to him, to carry on the great design of his gospel, which is to espouse souls to Christ, and convert sinners to him from whom they have diverted.

2. Christ soon determines what to do in this case, and his spouse agrees with him in it, *ver. 9.* *If she be a wall*, if the good work be once begun with the Gentiles, with the souls that are to be called in, if the *little sister*, when she shall be spoken for by the gospel will but receive the word and build herself upon Christ the foundation, and frame her doings to turn to the Lord, as the wall is in order to the house, *we will build upon her a palace of silver* or build her up into such a palace; we will carry on the good work that is begun till the wall becomes a palace; the wall of stone a palace of silver; which goes beyond the boast of Augustus Caesar, and what he found brick he left marble. This *little sister*, when once she is joined to the Lord, shall be made to grow into a holy temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph. ii. 21, 22. *If she be a door*, when this palace comes to be finished, and the doors of this wall set up, which was the last thing done, *Neh. vii. 1.* then we will inclose her with the boards of Cedar, i. e. will carefully and effectually protect her that she shall receive no damage: *We will do it*; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all concur in contriving, carrying on, and crowning the blessed work when the time comes: whatever is wanting shall be set in order, and the work of faith shall be fulfilled with power: though the beginnings of grace be small, and the latter end shall greatly increase: the church is in care concerning those that are yet uncalled; let me alone, saith Christ, I will do all that which is necessary to be done for them: trust me with it.

3. The spouse takes this occasion to acknowledge with thankfulness his kindness to her, *ver. 10.* She is very willing to trust him with her *little sister*, for she herself had had great experience of his grace, and for her part she owed her all to it. *I am a wall, and my breasts like towers.* This she speaks, not as upbraiding her little sister that had no breasts, but comforting herself concerning her, that he who had made her what she is, that had built her up upon himself, and made her to grow up to maturity, could and would do the same kindness for those whose case she bore upon her heart. *Then was I in his eyes as one that had found favour.* See,

(1.) What she values herself by, her having found favour in the eyes of Jesus Christ; those are happy, truly happy, and for ever so, that have the favour of God, and are accepted of him.

(2.) How she ascribes the good work of God in her to the good will of God towards her: he hath made me a wall, and my breasts as towers, and then, in that instance more than in any thing, I experienced his love to me. *Hail, thou that art highly favoured*, for in thee Christ is formed.

(3.) What pleasures God takes in the work of his own hands. When we are made as a wall, as a brazen wall, Jer. i. 18. xv. 20. that stands firm against the blast of the terrible ones, Isa. xxv. 4. then God takes delight in us to do us good.

(4.) With what joy and triumph we ought to speak of God's grace towards us, and with what satisfaction we should look back upon the special times and seasons, when we were in his eyes as those that find favour; these were days never to be forgotten.

(2.) They are here consulting about a vineyard they had in the country, the church of Christ on earth, considered under the notion of a vineyard, *ver. 11.* 12. *Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon, had a kingdom in the possession of a multitude, a numerous people.* As he was a type of Christ, so his vineyard was a type of the church of Christ. Our Saviour has given us a key to these verses in the parable of the vineyard let out to unthankful husbandmen, Matt. xxi. 33. The bargain was, that everyone of the tenants having so much of the vineyard assigned him as would

contain a thousand vines, he was to pay the annual rent of a thousand pieces of silver; for we read, *Isaiah vi. 23.* that in a fruitful soil there were a thousand vines and a thousand silverlings. Observe,

1. Christ's church is his vineyard, a pleasant and peculiar place privileged with many honours; he delights to walk in it as a man in his vineyard, and is pleased with its fruits.

2. He has committed each of us with this vineyard, as keepers of it; the privileges of the church are that good thing which he has committed to us to be kept as our sacred trust; the service of the church is to be our business, according as our capacity is: *S. n. go work to day in my vineyard*; Adam, in innocency, was to *dress the garden and to keep it*.

3. He expects rent from those that are employed in his vineyard and intrusted with it: *He comes seeking fruit*, and requires gospel duty of all those that enjoy gospel privileges. Every one of what rank or degree soever, must bring glory and honour to Christ, and do some service to the interest of his kingdom in the world, in consideration of what benefit and advantage they enjoy by their share of the privileges of the vineyard.

4. Though Christ has let out his vineyard to keepers, yet still it is his, and he has his eye always upon it for good; for if he did not wait over it night and day, Isaiah xxvii. 1. 2. the watchmen to whom he has let it out, would keep it but in vain, Psalm cxxvii. 1. Some take these for Christ's words, *ver. 12.* *My vineyard which is mine is before me*; and they observe how he harps upon his property in it; it is *my vineyard which is mine*, so dear is his church to him, it is *his own in the world*, John xiii. 1. and therefore he will always have it under his protection; it is his own, and he will look after it.

5. The church that enjoys the privileges of the vineyard, must have them always before her; the keeping of the vineyard requires constant care and diligence. They are rather the words of the spouse, *My vineyard which is mine before me*. She had lamented her fault and folly in not keeping her own vineyard, chap. i. 6. but now she resolves to reform. Our hearts are our vineyards, which we must keep with all diligence; and therefore we must have a watchful, jealous eye upon them at all times.

6. Our great care must be to pay rent for what we hold of Christ's vineyard, and to see that we do not go behind-hand, nor disappoint the messengers he sends to receive the fruits, Matt. xxi. 34. *Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and shalt have.* The main of the profits belong to Christ; to him and his praise all our fruits must be dedicated.

7. If we be careful to give Christ the praise of our church privileges, we may then take to ourselves the comfort and benefit of them. If the owner of the vineyard has had his due, the keepers of it shall be well paid for their care and pains, they shall have *two hundred*, which no doubt was looked upon as a good profit. They that work for Christ are working for themselves, and shall be well enabled gainers by it.

13. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice; cause me to hear it. 14. ¶ Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

Christ and his spouse are here parting for a while, she must stay below in the gardens, on earth where she hath work to do for him, he must remove to the mountains of spices in heaven, where he has business to attend for her, as an Advocate with the Father: Now observe with what mutual endearments they part:

(1.) He desires to hear often from her: she is good at her pen, she must be sure to write to him, she knows how to direct it, *ver. 13.* *Thou that for the present dwellest in the gardens*, dressing and keeping them till thou remove from the garden below, to the paradise above: *Thou, O believer, whoever thou art, that dwellest in the gardens of solemn ordinances, in the gardens of church fellowship and communion, the companions are so happy as to hear thy voice, cause me to hear it too.*

Observe 1. Christ's friends should keep a good correspondence one with another, and, as dear companions, speak often one to another, *Mal. iii. 16.* and hearken to one another's voice; they should edify, and encourage, and respect one another: They are companions in the kingdom and patience of Christ, and therefore, as fellow-travellers, should keep up mutual freedom, and not be shy of, or strange to one another; the communion of saints is an article of our covenant, as a well as an article of our creed; to exhort one another daily, and be glad to be exhorted one by another. *Hearken to the voice of the church*, as far as it agrees with the voice of Christ, his companions will do so.

2. In the midst of our communion one with another, we must not neglect our communion with Christ, but let him see our countenance and hear our voice; he here bespeaks it: *the companions hearken to thy voice*, it is a pleasure to them, *cause me to hear it*: Thou makest thy complaints to them when any thing grieves thee, why dost thou not bring them to me, and let me hear them? Thou art free with them, be as free with me, pour out thy heart to me. Thus Christ, when he left his disciples, ordered them to send to him upon every occasion, *Ask, and ye shall receive.* Note, Christ not only accepts and answers, but even courts his people's prayers, not reckoning them a trouble to him, but an honour and a delight, *Prov. xv. 8.* *We cause him to hear our prayer*, when we not only pray, but wrestle and strive in prayer. He loves to be pressingly importuned, which is not the manner of men. Some read it, *Cause me to be heard*: Thou hast often an opportunity of speaking to thy companions, and they hearken to what thou sayest; speak of me to them, let my name be heard among them, let me be the subject of thy discourse. "One word of Christ, (as Archbishop Usher used to say) before you part." No subject is more becoming, or should be more pleasing.

(2.) She desires his speedy return to her, *ver. 14.* *Make haste, my beloved, to come again and receive me to thyself; be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of spices*; let no time be lost; it is pleasant dwelling here in the gardens, but to depart, and be with thee, is far better; that therefore is it I wish, and wait, and long for: *Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.* Observe,

1. Though Jesus Christ be now retired, he will return: The heavens, those high mountains of sweet spices, must contain him till the time of refreshing shall come; and those times will come, when every eye shall see him, in all the pomp and power of the upper and better world; the mystery of God being finished, and the mystical body completed.

2. True believers, as they are looking for, so they are hastening to the coming of that day of the Lord; not that they would have him make more haste than good speed, but that the intermediate counsels may all be fulfilled, and then that the end may come, the sooner the better: Not that they think him slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but thus they express the strength of their affection to him, and the vainness of their expectations from him when he comes again.

3. Those only that can in sincerity call Christ their beloved, their best beloved, can upon good grounds desire him to hasten his second coming: As for

for those whose hearts go a whoring after the world, and who set their affections on the things of the earth, they cannot love his appearing, but dread it rather, because then the earth, and all the things of it which they have chosen for their portion, will be burnt up: But they that truly love Christ long for his second coming, because it will be the crown both of his glory and their bliss.

4. The comfort and satisfaction which we sometimes have in communion with God in grace here, should make us breathe the more earnestly after the immediate vision, and complete fruition of him in the kingdom of glory. The spouse, after an endearing conference with her beloved, finding it must break off, concludes with this affectionate request for the perfecting and perpetuating of this happiness in the future state. The clusters of grapes that meet us in this wilderness, should make us long for the full vintage in Canaan.

If a day in his courts be so sweet, what then will an eternity within the veil be? If this be heaven, O that I were there!

5. It is good to conclude our devotions with a joyful expectation of the glory to be revealed, and holy humble breathings towards it. We should not part but with the prospect of meeting again. It is good to conclude every sabbath with thoughts of the everlasting sabbath, which shall have no night at the end of it, nor any week-day to come after: To conclude every sacrament with thoughts of the everlasting feast, when we shall sit down with Christ at his table in his kingdom, to rise no more, and drink of the wine new there; and to break up every religious assembly, in hopes of the general assembly of the church of the first born, when time and days shall be no more. Let the blessed Jesus hasten that blessed day. *Why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming? When turn the wheels of his chariots?*

THE END OF SOLOMON'S SONG.

P R E F A C E

TO THE

P R O P H E T I C A L B O O K S,

V I Z.

ISAIAH,
JEREMIAH,
LAMENTATIONS,
EZEKIEL,
DANIEL,
HOSEA,

JOEL,
AMOS,
OBADIAH,
JONAH,
NICAH,
NAHUM,

HABAKKUK,
ZEPHANIAH,
HAGGAI,
ZECHARIAH,
AND
MALACHI.

THOSE books of Scripture are all *prophetical*, which here in *weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling*, we have endeavoured a methodical explication, and a practical improvement of; I call them *prophetical*, because so they are for the main, though we have some histories here and there brought in for the illustration of the prophecies; and a book of Lamentations: Our Saviour often puts *the Law and the Prophets* for all the Old Testament. The prophets by waving the ceremonial precepts, and not insisting on them, but only on the weightier matters of the law, plainly intimated the abolishing of that part of the law of Moses by the gospel; and by their many predictions of Christ, and the kingdom of his grace, they intimated the accomplishing and perfecting that part of the law of Moses in the gospel. Thus the prophets were the *nexus* between the law and the gospel, and are therefore fitly placed between them.

These books being prophetical, as such they are divine, and of heavenly original and extraction. We have human laws, human histories, and human poems, as well as divine ones, but we can have no human prophecies. Wise and good men may make prudent conjectures concerning future events, moral prognostications we call them; but it is essential to true prophecy, that it be of God. The learned Huetius* lays this down for one of his axioms, *Omnis prophetica facultas à Deo est*, and proves it to be the sense both of Jews and heathen, that it is God's prerogative to foresee things to come, and whoever had such a power had it from God. And therefore the Jews reckon all prophecy to be given by the highest degree of inspiration, except that which was peculiar to Moses. When our Saviour asked the chief priests whether John's baptism were from heaven, or of men? they durst not say of men, because the people counted him a prophet, and if so, then not of men.

The Hebrew name for a prophet is נביא a speaker, preacher, or orator, a messenger, or interpreter, that delivers God's messages to the children of men; as a herald to proclaim war, or an ambassador to treat of peace. But then it must be remembered, that he was formerly called ראה or חזה, that is, a seer, 1 Sam. ix. 9. for prophets with the eyes of their minds first saw what they were to speak, and then spoke what they had seen.

Prophecy, taken strictly, is the foretelling of things to come; and there were those to whom God gave this power, not only that it might be a sign for the confirming of the faith of the church, concerning the doctrine preached when the things foretold should be fulfilled, but for warning, instruction, and comfort, in prospect of what they themselves might not live to see accomplished, but which should be fulfilled in its season; so predictions of things to come long after, might be of present use.

The learned Dr. Grew† describes prophecy in this sense to be, "A declaration of the divine prescience, looking at any distance through a train of infinite causes known and unknown to us, upon a sure and certain effect." Whence he infers, "That the being of prophecies supposeth the non-being of contingents, for though there are many things which seem to us to be contingents, yet were they so indeed there could have been no prophecy: and there can be no contingent seemingly so loose and independent, but it is a link of some chain." And Huetius gives this reason, why none but God can foretell things to come, because every effect depends upon an infinite number of preceding causes, all which in their order must be known to him that foretells the effect, and therefore to God only, for none but he is omniscient: So Tully argues, *Qui tenet causas rerum futurarum, idem necesse est omnia tenet quæ futura sint; quod facere nemo nisi Deus potest‡*. And therefore we find that by this the God of Israel proves himself to be God, that by his prophets he foretold things to come, which came to pass according to the prediction, Isa. xli. 9, 10. And by this he disproves the pretensions of the Pagan deities, that they could not shew the things that were to come to pass hereafter, Isa. xli. 23. Tertullian proves the divine authority of the Scripture from the fulfilling of Scripture prophecies, *Idoneum opinor Testimonium Divinitatis, veritas Divinationis§*. And besides the foretelling of things to come, the discovering of things secret by revelation from God, is a branch of prophecy, as Ahijah's discovering Jeroboam's wife in disguise, and Elisha's telling Gehazi what passed between him and Naaman.

But|| prophecy, in Scripture language is taken more largely for a declaration of such things to the children of men, either by word or writing, as God has revealed to them that speak or write it, by vision, dream, or inspiration, guiding their minds, their tongue, and pens by his Holy Spirit; and giving them not only ability, but authority to declare such things in his

* Demonstrat. Evang. pag. 11.

† Cosmol. Sacra, lib. iv. cap. 6.

‡ Cicero de Divin. lib. 1.

§ Apol. cap. xx.

|| Du Pin, Hist. of the Canon, l. 1. c. 2.

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his name, and to preface what they say with, *Thus saith the Lord*. In this sense it is said, That the prophecy of Scripture came not in old time by the will of man, as other pious moral discourses might, but holy men spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Pet. i. 20. 21. The same Holy Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters to produce the world, moved upon the minds of the prophets to produce the Bible.

Now I think it is worthy to be observed, that all nations having had some sense of God and religion, have likewise had a notion of prophets and prophecy; have had a veneration for them, and a desire and expectation of acquaintance and communion with the gods they worshipped in that way. Witness their oracles, their augurs, and the many arts of divination they had in use among them, in all the ages, and all the countries of the world.

It is commonly urged as an argument against the Atheists, to prove that there is a God, That all nations of the world acknowledged some god or other, some being above them to be worshipped and prayed to, to be trusted in and praised; the most ignorant and barbarous nations could not avoid the knowledge of it; the most learned and polite nations could not avoid the belief of it. And this is a sufficient proof of the general and unanimous consent of mankind to this truth; though far the greatest part of men made to themselves gods, which yet were no gods. Now I think it may be urged with equal force against the Deists, for the proof of a divine revelation, that all nations of the world had, and had veneration for that which they at least took to be a divine revelation, and could not live without it; though in this also they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. But if there were not a true Deity, and a true prophecy, there would never have been pretended deities and counterfeit prophecies.

Lycurgus and Numa, those two great lawgivers of the Spartan and Roman commonwealths, brought their people to an observance of the laws, by possessing them with a notion that they had them by divine revelation, and so making it a point of religion to observe them. And those that have been never so little conversant with the Greek and Roman histories, as well as with the more ancient ones of Chaldea and Egypt, cannot but remember what a mighty deference their princes and great commanders, and not their unthinking commonalty only, paid to the oracles and prophets, and the prognostications of their soothsayers, which in all cases of importance were consulted with abundance of gravity and solemnity; and how often the resolutions of councils, and the motions of mighty armies turned upon them, though they appeared never so groundless and far-fetched.

There is a full account given by that learned philosopher and physician Caspar Peucer *, of the many kinds of divination and prediction used among the Gentiles, by which they took on them to tell the fortune both of states and of particular persons. They were all, he saith, reduced by Plato to two heads; *Divinatio Mavrix*, which was a kind of inspiration, or was thought to be so; the prophet or prophetess foretelling things to come by an internal *fatus* or fury: such was the oracle of Apollo at Delphos, and that of Jupiter Trophonius; which, with other the like, were famous for many ages, during the prevalency of the kingdom of darkness: But, (as appears by some of the Pagan writers themselves) they were all silenced and struck dumb, when the gospel (that truly divine oracle) began to be preached to the nations. The other kind of divination was that which he calls *Oiwvixix*, which was a prognostication by signs according to rules of art, as by the flight of birds, the entrails of beasts, by stars or meteors, and abundance of ominous accidents, with which a foolish world was miserably imposed upon. A large account of this matter we have also in the late learned dissertations of Anton. Van Dale, to which I refer the reader †.

But nothing of this kind made a greater noise in the Gentile world than the oracles of the Sibyls, and their prophecies; their name signifies a divine counsel: *Sibyllæ*, qu. *Siobulæ*; *Sios* in the Æolic dialect being put for *Theros*. Peucer saith, "Every nation almost had their Sibyls, but those of Greece were most celebrated: They lived in several ages; the most ancient is said to be the *Sibylla Delphica*, who lived before the Trojan war, or about that time: The *Sibylla Erythraea* was the most noted; she lived about the time of Alexander the Great: But it was the *Sibylla Cumana* of whom the story goes, that she presented herself and nine books of oracles to Tarquinius Superbus, which she offered to sell him at so vast a rate, that he refused to purchase them, upon which she burnt three, and upon his second refusal the other three, but made him give the same rate for the remaining three, which were deposited with great care in the Capitol: But those being afterwards burnt accidentally with the Capitol, a collection was made of other Sibylline oracles, and those are they which Virgil refers to in his fourth Eclogue ‡."

All the oracles of the Sibyls that are extant were put together and published in Holland not many years ago by Servatius Gallæus, in Greek and Latin, with large and learned notes; together with all that could be met with of the metrical oracles that go under the names of Jupiter, Apollo, Serapis, and others, by Joannes Opsopæus.

The Oracles of the Sibyls were appealed to by many of the Fathers, for the confirmation of the Christian religion; Justin Martyr § doth it with a great deal of assurance, persuading the Greeks to give credit to that ancient Sibyl, whose works were extant all the world over; and to their testimony he appeals concerning the general conflagration, and to that of Hydraspis, and concerning the torments of hell. Clemens Alexandrinus || often quotes the Sibyl's verses with great respect, so doth Lactantius ¶; St. Austin **, *De civitate Dei*, has the famous acrostic at large, said to be one of the oracles of the *Sibylla Erythraea*, the first letters of the verses making *Ἰησὺς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ υἱὸς Σωτὴρ*, *Jesus Christ the Son of God the Saviour*. Divers passages they produce out of those oracles which expressly foretel the coming of the Messiah, his being of a virgin, his miracles, his sufferings, particularly his being buffeted, spit upon, crowned with thorns, having vinegar and gall given him to drink, &c.

Whether these oracles were genuine and authentic or no, has been much controverted among the learned. Baronius and the Popish writers generally admit and applaud them, and build much upon them; so do some Protestant writers; Isaac Vossius has written a great deal to support the reputation of them, and (as I find him quoted by Van Dale) will needs have it, that they were formerly a part of the canon of Scripture. And a learned Prelate of our own nation, Bishop Montague, pleads largely and with great assurance for their authority, and is of opinion that some of them were divinely inspired.

But many learned men look upon it to be a pious fraud, as they call it; that those verses of the Sibyls which speak so very expressly of Christ and the future state, were forged by some Christians, and imposed upon the over-credulous; Huetius ††, though of the Romish church, condemns both the ancient and modern compositions of the Sibyls, and refers his reader for the proof of the vanity of them to the learned Blondel. Van Dale and Gallæus look upon them to be a forgery. And the truth is, they speak so much more particularly and plainly concerning our Saviour and the future state, than any of the prophets of the Old Testaments do, that we must conclude St. Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, guilty not only of a very great omission, that in all his preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, and in all his epistles to the Gentile churches, he never so much as mentions the prophecies of the Sibyls, nor vouches their authority, as he doth that of the Old Testament prophets, in his preaching, and writing to the Jews; but likewise of a very great mistake, in making it the particular advantage which the Jews had above the Gentiles, that to them were committed the oracles of God, Rom. iii. 1. and they were the children of the prophets; and in speaking of the Gentiles as sitting in darkness, and being afar off. We cannot conceive that heathen women, and those acted by dæmons, should speak more clearly and fully of the Messiah than those holy men did, who we are sure were moved by the Holy Ghost; or that the Gentiles should be intrusted with larger and earlier discoveries of the great salvation than that people of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come. But enough, if not more than enough, of the pretenders to prophecy. It is a good remark which the learned Gallæus makes upon the great veneration which the Romans had for the oracles of the Sibyls, for which he quotes Dionysius Halicarnassæus, *Οὐδὲν οὐτὲ Πρωκτοῖσι φυλάττειν οὐτὲ ὅσιον κτήμα οὐτὲ ἱερὸν, οὐς τὰ Σιβυλλεῖα θεσφοῦται*, nothing was so sacred with them as those books; *Ille se pro vitreis suis thesauris adeo decertavit, quid nos pro geminis, nostris a Deo inspiratis?* If they had such a value for these counterfeits, how precious should the true treasure of the divine oracles be to us: And of that we come next to speak.

Prophecy, we are sure, was of equal date with the church; for faith comes not by thinking and seeing, as philosophy doth, but by hearing, by hearing the Word of God, Rom. x. 27. In the antediluvian period Adam received divine revelation in the promise

* De præcipuis Divinationum generibus, A. 1591. † De verâ ac falsâ prophetiâ, A. 1696. ‡ Vid. Virg. *Æneid*, lib. vi. § Ad Græcos cohortari, *juste fecim*. || Apol. 2. p. mihi 66. l. ¶ Quest. & Respons. p. 436. ** Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. 11. cap. 23. †† Demonstrat. p. 748.

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promise of the seed of the woman, and no doubt communicated it in the name of the Lord to his seed, and was prophet as well as priest to his numerous family. Enoch was a prophet, and foretold perhaps the deluge, however the last judgment, that of the great day. *Behold, the Lord comes*, Jude 14. When men began as a church to call upon the name of the Lord, Gen. iv. 26. or to call themselves by his name, they were blessed with prophets; for the *prophecy came in old time*, 2 Pet. i. 21. it is venerable for its antiquity.

When God renewed his covenant of providence (and that a figure of the covenant of grace) with Noah and his sons, we soon after find Noah, as a prophet, foretelling not only the servitude of Canaan, but God's enlarging Japhet by Christ, and his dwelling in the tents of Shein, Gen. ix. 26, 27. And when upon the general revolt of mankind to idolatry, (as in the former period upon the apostasy of Cain) God distinguished a church for himself by the call of Abraham, and by his covenant with him and his seed, he conferred upon him and other the patriarchs, the spirit of prophecy; for when he reproved kings for their fakes, this was it he said, *Touch not mine anointed*, who have received that unction from the holy One, and *do my prophets no harm*, Psal. cv. 14, 15. And of Abraham, he said expressly, *He is a prophet*, Gen. xx. 7. and it was with a prophetic eye, as a seer, that he *saw Christ's day*, John viii. 36. saw it at so great a distance, and yet with so great an assurance triumphed in it. And Stephen seems to speak on the first settling of a correspondence between him and God, by which he was established to be a prophet, when he saith, *the God of glory appeared to him*, Acts vii. 2. appeared in glory. Jacob, upon his death-bed, as a prophet, told his sons *what should befall them in the last days*, Gen. xlix. 1—10. and spoke very particularly concerning the Messiah.

Hitherto was the infancy of the church, and with it of prophecy; it was the dawning of that day; and that morning light owed its rise to the Sun of righteousness, though he rose not till long after; but it shone more and more. During the bondage of Israel in Egypt, this, as other glories of the church, was eclipsed; but as the church made a considerable and memorable advance in the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the forming of them into a people, so did the Spirit of prophecy in Moses, the illustrious instrument employed in that great service; and that it was by that Spirit that he performed that service; so it is said *Hos. xii. 13. By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved* through the wilderness to Canaan, i. e. by Moses as a prophet. It appears by what God said to Aaron, that there were then other prophets among them, to whom God made known himself and his will in dreams and visions, *Numb. xii. 6.* but to Moses he spake in a peculiar manner, *mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches*, *Numb. xii. 8.* Nay, such a plentiful effusion was there of the Spirit of prophecy at that time, (because Moses was such a prophet as was to be a type of Christ the great prophet) that some of the Spirit was put upon seventy elders of Israel at once, *and they prophesied*, *Numb. xi. 25.* What they said was extraordinary, and not only under the direction of a prophetic inspiration, but under the constraint of a prophetic impulse; as appears by the case of Eldad and Medad.

When Moses that great prophet was laying down, he promised Israel that the *Lord God would raise them up a prophet of their brethren like unto him*, *Deut. xviii. 15—18.* Which words, saith the learned Bishop Stillingfleet * though in their full and complete sense they relate to Christ, and to him they are more than once applied in the New Testament, yet there is included in them a promise of an order of prophets, which should succeed Moses in the Jewish church, and by the *Λογια ζῶντα*, the *living oracles* among them, *Acts vii. 38.* by which they might know the mind of God: For in the next words he lays down rules for the trial of prophets, whether what they said was of God or no. And it is observable, that that promise comes in immediately upon an express prohibition of the Pagan rites of divination, and the consulting of wizards and familiar spirits; you shall not need to do that, (saith Moses) for to your much better satisfaction you shall have prophets divinely inspired, by whom you may know from God himself both what to do, and what to expect.

But as Jacob's dying prophecy concerning the sceptre in Judah, and the lawgiver between his feet, did not begin to be remarkably fulfilled till David's time, most of the Judges being of other tribes, so Moses's promise of a succession of prophets began not to receive its accomplishment till Samuel's time, a little before the other promise began to emerge and operate; and it was an introduction to the other, for it was by Samuel, as a prophet, that David was anointed king; which was an intimation that the prophetic office of our Redeemer, should make way both in the world and in the heart for his kingly offices; and therefore when he was asked, *Art thou a king*, John xviii. 37. he answered not evasively, but very pertinently, *I came to bear witness to the truth*; and so to rule as a king, purely by the power of truth.

During the government of the Judges there was a pouring out of the Spirit, but more as a spirit of conduct and courage for war, than as a spirit of prophecy; Deborah is indeed called a prophetess, because of her extraordinary qualifications for judging Israel; but that is the only mention of prophecy, that I remember, in all the book of *Judges*: Extraordinary messages were sent by angels, as to Gideon and Manoah; and it is expressly said, that before the word of the Lord came to Samuel, *1 Sam. iii. 1.* it was *precious*, it was very scarce, there was no open vision. And it was therefore with more than ordinary solemnity that the word of the Lord came first to Samuel; and by degrees notice and assurance was given to all Israel, *that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord*, *ver. 20.*

In Samuel's time and by him the schools of the prophets were erected, by which prophecy was dignified, and provision made for a succession of prophets; for it should seem that in those colleges hopeful young men were bred up in devotion, in a constant attendance upon the instruction the prophets gave from God, and under a strict discipline, as candidates, or probationers for prophecy, who were called the sons of the prophets; and their religious exercises of prayer, conference, and psalmody especially, are called *prophesyings*; and their præfect, or president, is called *their father*, *1 Sam. x. 12.* Out of these God ordinarily chose the prophets he sent; yet not always: Amos was no prophet, or prophet's son, *Amos vii. 14.* had not his education in the schools of the prophets, and yet was commissioned to go on God's errands, and (which is observable) though he had not academical education himself, yet he seems to speak of it with great respect, when he reckons it among the favours God had bestowed upon Israel, that he *raised up of their sons for prophets, and of their young men for Nazarites*, *Amos ii. 11.*

It is worth noting, that when the glory of the priesthood was eclipsed by the iniquity of the house of Eli, the desolations of Shiloh, and the obscurity of the ark, there was then a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of prophecy than had been before; a standing ministry of another kind was thereby erected, and a succession of it kept up. And thus afterwards in the kingdom of the ten tribes, where there was no legal priesthood at all, yet there were prophets, and prophets' sons; in Ahab's time we meet with an hundred of them, whom Obadiah hid by *fifty in a cave*, *1 Kings xviii. 4.* When the people of God that desired to know his mind wanted one way of instruction, God furnished them with another, and a less ceremonious one; for he left not himself without witness, nor them without a guide. And when they had no temple or altar, that they could attend upon with any safety or satisfaction, they had private meetings at the prophets' houses, to which the devout faithful worshippers of God resorted, as we find the good Shunamite did, *2 Kings iv. 23.* and where they kept the new-moons and their sabbaths comfortably and to their edification.

David was himself a prophet, so St. Peter calls him, *Acts ii. 30.* and though we read not of God's speaking to him by dreams and visions, yet we are sure *the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, and his word was his tongue*, *2 Sam. xxiii. 2.* and he had those about him that were seers, that were his seers, as Gad and Iddo, that brought him messages from God, and wrote the history of his times. And now the products of the Spirit of prophecy were translated into the service of the temple, not only in the model of the house, which the Lord made David *understand in writing by his hand upon him*, *1 Chron. xxviii. 19.* but in the worship performed there, for there we find Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, prophesying with harps and other musical instruments, according to the order of the king, not to foretel things to come, but to *give thanks and to praise the Lord*, *1 Chron. xxviii. 1, 2, 3.* yet in their psalms they spoke much of Christ and his kingdom, and the glory to be revealed.

In the succeeding reigns, both of Judah and Israel, we frequently meet with prophets sent on particular errands to Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Aha, and other of the kings, who it is probable instructed the people in the things of God at other times, though it be not recorded. But prophecy growing into contempt with many, God revived the honour of it, and put a new lustre upon it, in the power given to Elijah and Elisha to work miracles, and the great things God did by them, for the confirming

* Orig. Sacr. B. 2. c. 4.

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confirming of the people's faith in it, and the awakening of their regard to it, 2 *Kings* ii. 3.—iv. 1. 38.—v. 22.—vi. 1. In their time, and by their agency, it should seem, that the schools of the prophets were revived, and we find sons of the prophets, fellows of those sacred colleges, employed in carrying messages to the great men, as to Ahab, 1 *Kings* xx. 35. and to Jehu, 2 *Kings* ix. 1.

Hitherto the prophets of the Lord delivered their messages by word of mouth, only we read of one writing which came from Elijah the prophet to Jehoram king of Israel, 2 *Chron.* xxi. 12. The histories of those times which are left us were compiled by prophets under a divine direction, and when the Old Testament is divided into the Law and the Prophets, the historical books are for that reason reckoned among the prophets. But in the later times of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, some of the prophets were divinely inspired to write their prophecies, or abstracts of them, and to leave them upon record for the benefit of after-ages, that the children which should be born might praise the Lord for them, and by comparing the event with the prediction, might have their faith confirmed. And probably those later prophets spoke more fully and plainly of the Messiah and his kingdom than their predecessors had done, and for that reason their prophecies were put in writing, not only for the encouragement of the pious Jews that looked for the consolation of Israel, but for the use of us Christians, upon whom the ends of the world are come, as David's psalms had been for the same reason, that the Old Testament and the New might mutually give light and lustre to each other. Many other faithful prophets there were at the same time, who spoke in God's name, that did not commit their prophecies to writing, but were of those whom God sent, rising up betimes and sending them; the contempt of whom, and of their messages, brought ruin without remedy upon that sottish people, that knew not the day of their visitation.

In their captivity they had some prophets, some to shew them how long; and though it was not by a prophet, like Moses, that they were brought up out of Babylon, as they had been out of Egypt, but by Joshua the high-priest first, and afterwards by Ezra the scribe, to shew that God can do his work by ordinary means when he pleaseth; yet soon after their return, the Spirit of prophecy was poured out plentifully, and continued (according to the Jews' computation) forty years in the second temple, but ceased in Malachi. Then (say the Rabbins) *the Holy Spirit was taken from Israel*, and they had the benefit only of the *Bath-kol*, the daughter of a voice; viz. a voice from heaven, which they look upon to be the lowest degree of divine revelation. Now herein they are witnesses against themselves for rejecting the true Messiah, for our Lord Jesus, and he only, was spoken to by a voice from heaven at his baptism, his transfiguration, and his entrance on his sufferings.

In John Baptist prophecy revived, and therefore in him the gospel is said to begin, when the church had had no prophets for above three hundred years. We have not only the *vox populi* to prove John a prophet, for all the people counted him so, but *vox Dei* too, for Christ calls him a prophet, *Matt.* xi. 9, 10. he had an extraordinary commission from God to call people to repentance, was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, and was therefore called the *prophet of the Highest*, because he went before the face of the Lord to prepare his way, *Luke* i. 15, 16. and though he did no miracle, nor gave any sign or wonder, yet this proved him a true prophet, that all he said of Christ was true, *John* x. 31. Nay, and this proved him more than a prophet, than any of the other prophets, that whereas by other prophets Christ was discovered as at a great distance, by him he was discovered as already come, and he was enabled to say, *Behold the Lamb of God*.

But after the ascension of our Lord Jesus there was a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of prophecy than ever before; then was the promise fulfilled that God would pour out his spirit upon all flesh, (and not as hitherto upon the Jews only) and their sons and their daughters shall prophesy, *Acts* ii. 16, &c. The gift of tongues was one new product of the Spirit of prophecy, and given for a particular reason, that the Jewish pale being taken down, all nations might be brought into the church. These and other gifts of prophecy being for a sign, are long since ceased, and laid aside, and we have no encouragement to expect the revival of them; but on the contrary are directed to call the Scriptures the *more sure word of prophecy*, more sure than voices from heaven; and to them we are directed to take heed, to search them, and to hold them fast, 2 *Pet.* i. 19. all God's spiritual Israel know that they are established to be the *oracles of God*, 1 *Sam.* iii. 20. and if any add to or take from the book of that prophecy, they may read their doom in the close of it, God shall take blessings from them, and add curses to them, *Rev.* xxii. 18, 19.

Now concerning the prophets of the Old Testament, whose writings are before us; observe,

1. That they were all holy men, so we are assured by the apostle, that the prophecy came in old time by holy men of God, (and men of God they were commonly called, because they were devoted to him) who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. They were men, *subject to like passions as we are*, so Elijah, one of the greatest of them is said to have been, *James* v. 17. but they were holy men, men that in the temper of their minds, and the tenor of their lives, were examples of serious piety. Though there were many pretenders, that without warrant said, *Thus saith the Lord*, when he sent them not; and some that prophesied in Christ's name, but he never knew them, and they indeed were workers of iniquity; *Matt.* vii. 22, 23. and though the cursing, blaspheming lips of Balaam and Caiaphas, even then when they actually designed mischief, were over-ruled to speak oracles, yet none were employed and commissioned to speak as prophets, but those that had received the Spirit of grace and satisfaction; for holiness becomes God's house.

The Jewish doctors universally agree in this rule, That the Spirit of prophecy never rests upon any but a holy and wise man; and one whose passions are allayed*: Or, as others express it, A humble man, and a man of fortitude; i. e. one that has power to keep his sensual animal part in due subjection to religion and right reason. And some of them† give this rule. That the Spirit of prophecy doth not reside where there is either on the one hand grief and melancholy, or on the other hand laughter and lightness of behaviour, and impertinent idle talk: and it is commonly observed by them, both from the musical instruments used in the schools of the prophets in Samuel's time, and from the instance of Elisha's calling for a minstrel, 2 *Kings* iii. 15. that the divine presence doth not reside with sadness, but with cheerfulness; and Elisha, they say, had not yet recovered himself from the sorrow he conceived at parting with Elijah. They have also a tradition, but I know no ground for it, that all the while Jacob mourned for Joseph, the Shechinah, or Holy Spirit, withdrew from him. Yet I believe when David intimates that by his sin in the matter of Uriah he had lost the right Spirit, and the free Spirit, *Psal.* li. 10, 12. (which therefore he begs might be renewed in him, and restored to him) it was not because he was under grief, but because he was under guilt. And therefore in order to the return of that right and free Spirit, he prays that God would create in him a clean heart.

2. That they had all a full assurance in themselves of their divine mission; and (though they could not always prevail to satisfy others) yet they were abundantly satisfied themselves, that what they delivered as from God, and in his name, was indeed from him; and with the same assurance did the apostles speak of the word of life, as that which they had heard, and seen, and looked on, and which their hands had handled, 1 *John* i. 1. Nathan spake from himself when he encouraged David to build the temple, but afterwards knew he spake from God, when, in his name, he forbid him to do it.

God had various ways of making known to his prophets the messages they were to deliver to his people; it should seem ordinarily to have been by the ministry of angels; the Apocalypse Christ is expressly said to have signified by his angel to his servant John, *Rev.* i. 1. It was sometimes done in a vision, when the prophet was awake, sometimes in a dream, when the prophet was asleep, and sometimes by a secret but strong impression upon the mind of the prophet. But it is a maxim Maimonides has laid down, That all prophecy makes itself known to the prophet that it is prophecy indeed; that is, faith another of the Rabbins, by the vigour and liveliness of the perception, whereby he apprehends the thing propounded, which Jeremiah intimates when he saith, *The word of the Lord was as a fire in his bones*, *Jer.* xx. 9. and therefore they always spoke with great assurance, knowing they should be justified, *Isa.* l. 7.

3. That in their prophesying, both in receiving their message from God, and delivering it to the people, they always kept possession of their own souls, *Dan.* x. 8. Though sometimes their bodily strength was overpowered by the abundance of the revelations, and their eyes dazzled with the visionary light, as in the instances of Daniel and John, *Rev.* i. 17. yet still their understanding remained with them, and the free exercise of their reason. This is excellently well expressed

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expressed by a learned writer of our own *; "That the prophetic Spirit seating itself in the rational powers, as well as in the imagination, did never alienate the mind, but inform and enlighten it; and they that were acted by it always maintained a clearness and consistency of reason with strength and solidity of judgment. For (saith he afterwards †) God did not make use of idiots or fools to reveal his will by, but such whose intellectuals were entire and perfect; and he unprinted such a clear copy of his truth upon them, as that it became their own sense, being digested fully into their understandings, so as they were able to deliver and represent it to others, as truly as any can paint forth his own thoughts." God's messengers were speaking men, not speaking trumpets.

The Fathers frequently took notice of this difference between the prophets of the Lord and the false prophets; that the pretenders to prophecy that either were acted by an evil spirit, or were under the force of a heated imagination; that these counterfeits underwent alienations of mind, and delivered what they had to say in the utmost toss and disorder, as the Pythian prophetess, that delivered her infernal oracles with many antic gestures, tearing her hair and foaming at the mouth. And by this rule they condemned the Mantonists, that pretended to prophecy in the second century, that what they said was in a way of extasy, nor like rational men, but like men in a frenzy. Chrysostom ‡ having described the furious, violent motions of the pretenders to prophecy, adds, *Ὁ δὲ Προφήτης οὐχ οὕτως*, a true prophet doth not do so, *Sed mente sobria, & constanti animi statu, & intelligens quæ profert, omnia pronunciat.* And Jerom in his preface to his Commentaries upon Nahum observes, that it is called the book of the vision of Nahum; *Non enim loquitur ἐν ἐκστάσει sed est liber intelligentis omnia quæ loquitur*; it is the word of one that understands all he speaks. And again ||, *Non ut amens loquitur propheta, nec in morem insanientium feminarum dat sine mente sonum.*

4. That they all drove at one and the same thing, which was to bring people to repent of their sins, and to return to God, and to do their duty to him. This was the errand on which all God's messengers were sent, to beat down sin, and to revive and advance serious piety; the burden of every song was, *Turn ye now every one from his evil way; amend your ways and your doings, and execute judgment between a man and his neighbour*, Jer. vii. 3, 5. See Zech. vii. 7, 8.—viii. 10. The scope and design of all their prophecies was to enforce the precepts and sanctions of the law of Moses, the moral law, which is of universal and perpetual obligation. Here is nothing of the ceremonial institutes, of the carnal ordinances, that were imposed only till the times of reformation, Heb. ix. 10. Those were now waxing old, and ready to vanish away; but they make it their business to press the great and weighty matters of the law, *judgment, mercy, and truth.*

5. That they all bear witness to Jesus Christ, and had an eye to him. God's raising up the horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, was consonant to, and in pursuance of what he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which had been since the world began, Luke i. 69, 70. They prophesied of the grace that should come to us, and it was the Spirit of Christ in them, one and the same spirit that testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. Christ was then made known, and yet comparatively hid in the predictions of the prophets, as before in the types of the ceremonial law. And the learned Huetius § observes it was really admirable, that so many persons in different ages, should conspire, with one consent as it were, to foretell, some one particular, and others another, concerning Christ, all which had at length their full accomplishment in him. *Ab ipsis mundi incunabulis, per quatuor annorum millia, uno ore venturum Christum prædixerunt viri complures, in ejusque ortu, vita, virtutibus, rebus gestis, morte, ac tota denique Οἰκονομία præmonstrandum consenserunt.*

6. That these prophets were generally hated and abused in their several generations by those that lived with them. Stephen challengeth his judges to produce an instance to the contrary, *which of the prophets hath not your fathers persecuted?* Yea, and as it should seem for this reason, because *they shewed before of the coming of the just One*, Acts vii. 52. Some there were that trembled at the word of God in their mouths, but by the most they were ridiculed and despised, and (as ministers are now by prophane people) made a jest of, *Hos. ix. 7. the prophet was the fool in the play, Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee?* 2 Kings ix. 11. said one of the captains concerning one of the sons of the prophets! The Gentiles never treated their false prophets so ill as the Jews did their true prophets, but on the contrary had them always in veneration. The Jews mocking the messengers of the Lord, killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent unto them, was as amazing unaccountable an instance of the enmity that is in the carnal mind against God as any other. And this makes their rejection of Christ's gospel the less strange, that the Spirit of prophecy, which for many ages was so much the glory of Israel, in every age met with so much opposition, and there were those that *always resisted the Holy Ghost*, in the prophets, and *turned that glory into shame*. Acts vii. 51. But this was it that was the measure-filling sin of Israel, that brought upon them both their first destruction by the Chaldeans, and their final ruin by the Romans, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

7. That though men slighted these prophets God owned them, and put honour upon them. As they were men of God, his immediate servants, and his messengers, so he always shewed himself *the Lord God of the holy prophets*, Rev. xxii. 6. stood by them and strengthened them, and by his Spirit they were full of power; and those that slighted them, when they had lost them, were made to know to their confusion that *a prophet had been among them*. What was said of one of the primitive fathers of the prophets was true of them all, *the word was with them, and did let none of their words fall to the ground*, 1 Sam. iii. 19. What they said by way of warning and encouragement, for the enforcing of their calls to repentance and reformation, was to be understood conditionally: When God spake by them either on the one hand to *build* and to *plant*, or on the other hand to *pluck up* and *pull down*, the change of the people's way might produce a change of God's way, Jer. xviii. 7—10. such was Jonah's prophecy of Nineveh's ruin within forty days: or God might sometimes be better than his word in granting a reprieve: But what they said by way of prediction of a particular matter, and as a sign, did always come to pass exactly as it was foretold: yea, and the general predictions sooner or later took hold even of those that would fain have got clear of them, Zech. i. 6. for this is that which God glories in, that he *confirmeth the word of his servants, and performeth the counsel of his messengers*, Isa. xlv. 26.

In opening these prophecies I have endeavoured to give the genuine sense of them, as far as I could reach it, by consulting the best expositors, considering the scope and coherence, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual, the spiritual things of the Old Testament with those of the New, and especially by prayer to God for the conduct and direction of the Spirit of truth: But after all, there are many things here *dark and hard to be understood*, concerning the certain meaning of which though I could not gain myself, much less expect to give my reader full satisfaction, yet I have not, with the *unlearned and unstable, wrested them* to the destruction of any, 2 Pet. iii. 16. It is the prerogative of the Lamb of God to take this book and to open all its seals. I have likewise endeavoured to accommodate these prophecies to the use and service of those who desire to read the scripture, not only with understanding but with pious affections, and to their edification in faith and holiness. And we shall find all that is *given by inspiration of God is profitable*, 2 Tim. iii. 16. though not all alike profitable, not all alike easy or improveable; but when the mystery of God shall be finished, we shall see what we are now bound to believe, that there is not one idle word in all the prophecies of this book. What God hath said, as well as what he doth, *we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.*

The pleasure I have had in studying and meditating upon those parts of these prophecies which are plain and practical, and especially those that are evangelical, has been an abundant balance to and recompence for the harder task we have met with in other parts that are more obscure. In many parts of this field the treasure must be digged for, as that in the mines; but in other parts the surface is covered with rich and precious products, with corn, and flocks, of which we may say, as we said of Noah, These same have comforted us greatly concerning our work, and the toil of our hands, and have made it very pleasant and delightful; God grant it may be no less so to the readers!

And now let me desire the assistance of my friends, in setting up my Eben Ezer, here, in a thankful acknowledgment that hitherto the Lord has helped me. I desire to praise God that he hath spared my life to finish the Old Testament, and hath graciously given me some tokens of his presence with me in carrying on of this work; though the more I reflect upon myself, the more unworthy I see myself of the honour of being thus employed, and the more need I see of Christ, and his merit and grace. *Remember me, O my God, for good, and spare me according to the multitude of thy mercies.* The Lord forgive what is mine, and accept what is his own!

I pur-

* Smith of Prophecy, p. 100.

† Pag. 266.

‡ In 1 Cor. xii. 2.

|| Prolog. in Habac.

§ Demonstrat. Evang. p. 737.

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I purpose, if God continue my life and health, according to the measure of the grace given to me, and in a constant and entire dependence upon divine strength, to go through the New Testament in two volumes more. I intimated in my preface to the first volume, that I had drawn up some expositions upon some parts of the New Testament; viz. The gospels of St. Matthew and St. John; but they are so large, that to make them bear some proportion to the rest, it is necessary they be much contracted, so that I shall be obliged to write them all over again, and to make considerable alterations, and therefore I cannot expect they should be published but as these hitherto have been, if God permit, a volume every other year. I shall begin it now shortly, if the Lord will, and apply myself to it as closely as I can; and I earnestly desire the prayers of all that wish well to the undertaking, that if the Lord spare me to go on with it, I may be enabled to do it well, and so as that by it some may be led into the riches of the full assurance of understanding in the mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ, Col. ii. 2. And if it shall please God to remove me by death before it be finished, I trust I shall be able to say not only welcome his blessed will, but welcome that blessed world, in which though now we know but in part, and prophecy but in part, that knowledge which is perfect will come, and that which is partial will be done away; 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 9, 10—12. in which all our mistakes will be rectified, all our doubts resolved, all our deficiencies made up, all our endeavours in preaching, catechizing, and expounding, superseded and rendered useless, and all our prayers swallowed up in everlasting praises; in which prophecy, we now so much admire, shall fail, and tongues shall cease, and the knowledge we have now shall vanish away, as the light of the morning-star doth when the sun is risen; in which we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face. In a believing, comfortable, well-grounded expectation of that true and perfect light, I desire to continue, living and dying, in a humble and diligent preparation for it, let me spend my time, and in the full enjoyment of it, O that I may spend a glorious eternity!

JULY 18,
1712.

M. H.

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, Upon the Book of the PROPHET ISAIAH.

Prophet is a title that sounds very great to those who understand it, though in the eye of the world many of those that were dignified with it appeared very mean: a prophet is one that hath a great intimacy with heaven, and a great interest there; and consequently, a commanding authority upon earth. Prophecy is put for all divine revelation, 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. because that was most commonly by dreams, voices, or visions, communicated to prophets first, and by them to the children of men, Numb. xii. 6. Once indeed God himself spoke to all the thousands of Israel from the top of mount Sinai; it was so intolerably dreadful, that they begged for the future God would speak to them as he had done before, by men like themselves, whose terror should not make them afraid, nor hands be heavy upon them, Job xxxiii. 7. God approved the motion, they have well said, (saith he, Deut. v. 27, 28.) And the matter was then settled by consent of parties, that we never expect to hear from God any more in that way; but by prophets, who received their instructions immediately from God, with a charge to deliver them to his church. Before the sacred canon of the Old Testament began to be written, there were prophets who were instead of Bibles to the church. Our Saviour seems to reckon Abel among the prophets, Matt. xxiii. 31—35. Enoch was a prophet; and by him that was first in prediction which is to be last in execution, the judgment of the great day, Jude xiv. Behold the Lord comes with his holy myriads. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. God faith of Abraham, He is a prophet, Gen. xx. 7. Jacob foretold things to come, Gen. xlix. 1. Nay, all the patriarchs are called prophets, Psal. cv. 15. Do my prophets no harm. Moses was without compare the most illustrious of all the Old Testament prophets, for with him the Lord spake face to face, Deut. xxxiv. 10. He was the first writing prophet, and by his hand the first foundations of holy writ were laid; even those that were called to be his assistants in the government, had the Spirit of prophecy, such a plentiful effusion was there of that Spirit at that time, Numb. xi. 25. But after the death of Moses, for some ages, the Spirit of the Lord appeared and acted in the church of Israel more as a martial spirit, than as a Spirit of prophecy, and inspired men more for acting than speaking; I mean, in the time of the Judges: We find the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Othniel, Gideon, Samson, and others, for the service of their country with their swords, not with their pens; messages were then sent from heaven by angels, as to Gideon and Manoah, and to the people, Judges ii. 1. In all the book of Judges there is never once mention of a prophet, only Deborah is called a prophetess: then the word of the Lord was precious; there was no open vision, 1 Sam. iii. 1. They had the law of Moses newly written, let them study that. But in Samuel prophecy revived, and in him a famous epocha or period of the church began; a time of great light in a constant uninterrupted succession of prophets, till some time after the captivity, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed in Malachi; and then prophecy ceased for near four hundred years, till the coming of the great prophet and his forerunner. Some prophets were divinely inspired to write the histories of the church: but they did not put their names to their writings, only referring themselves for proof to the authentic records of those times, which were known to be drawn up by prophets, as Gad, Iddo, &c. David and others were prophets to write sacred songs for the use of the church. After them, we often read of prophets sent on particular errands, and raised up for special public services; among whom the most famous were Elijah and Elisha in the kingdom of Israel: but none of these put their prophecies in writing, nor have we any remains of them but some fragments in the histories of their times; yet nothing of their own writing, (that I remember) but one epistle of Elijah's, 2 Chron. xxi. 12. But towards the latter end of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, it pleased God to direct his servants to the prophets, to write and publish some of their sermons, or abstracts of them. The dates of many of their prophecies are uncertain, but the earliest of them was in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam the second, his cotemporary, king of Israel, about two hundred years before the captivity; and not long after Joash had slain Zechariah the son of Jehoida, in the courts of the temple: if they begin to murder the prophets, yet they shall not murder their prophecies; they shall remain as witnesses against them. Hosea was the first of the writing prophets; and Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, published their prophecies about the same time. Isaiah began some time after, and not long; but his prophecy is placed first, because it is the largest of them all, and has most in it of Him to whom all the prophets bare witness; and indeed, so much of Christ, that he is justly stiled the Evangelical Prophet, and by some of the ancients a fifth Evangelist. We shall have the general title of this book, ver. 1. and therefore shall here only observe some things.

1. Concerning the prophet himself; he was (if we may believe the tradition of the Jews) of the royal family, his father being (they say) brother to king Uzziah: however, he was much at court, especially in Hezekiah's time, as we find in his story; to which many think it is owing, that his stile is more curious and polite than that of some other of the prophets, and in some places exceeding lofty and soaring. The Spirit of God sometimes served his own purpose by the particular genius of the prophet; for prophets were not speaking trumpets through which the Spirit spake, but speaking men by whom the Spirit spake, making use of their natural powers, in respect both of light and flame, and advancing them above themselves.

2. Con-

2. Concerning the prophecy, it is transcendently excellent and useful; it was so to the church of God then, serving for conviction of sin, direction in duty, and consolation in trouble. Two great distresses of the church are here referred to, and comfort prescribed in reference to them: That by Sennacherib's invasion, which happened in his own time, and that of the captivity in Babylon, which happened long after, and in the supports and encouragements laid up for each of these times of need, we find abundance of the grace of the gospel. There are not so many quotations in the gospels out of any, perhaps not out of all the prophecies of the Old Testament, as out of this; nor so express testimonies concerning Christ, witness that of his being born of a virgin, *chap. ix.* and that of his sufferings, *chap. liii.* The beginning of this book abounds most with reproofs for sin, and threatenings of judgment; the latter end of it is full of good words and comfortable words: this method the Spirit of Christ took formerly in the prophets, and doth still; first to convince, and then to comfort; and those that would be blessed with the comforts, must submit to the convictions. Doubtless, Isaiah preached many sermons and delivered many messages to the people, which are not written in this book, as Christ did; and probably these sermons were delivered more largely and fully than they are here related; but so much is left on record as infinite Wisdom thought fit to convey to us, *on whom the ends of the world are come*: and these prophecies, as well as the histories of Christ, are written *that we might believe on the name of Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name; for to us is the gospel here preached, as well as unto them that lived then, and more clearly: O that it may be mixed with faith!*

C H A P. I.

The first verse of this chapter is intended for a title to the whole book, and it is likely that this was the first sermon that this prophet was appointed to publish, and to affix in writing (as Calvin thinks the custom of the prophets was) to the door of the temple, as with as proclamations are fixed to public places, that all might read them. *Hab. ii. 2.* and those that would, might take out authentic copies of them; the original being after some time laid up by the priests among the records of the temple. This sermon which is contained in this chapter, hath in it, 1. A high charge exhibited in God's name against the Jewish church and nation: (1.) For their ingratitude, *ver. 2, 3.* (2.) For their incorrigibility, *ver. 5.* (3.) For the universal corruption and degeneracy of the people, *ver. 4—6—21—22.* (4.) For their rulers' perverting of justice, *ver. 23, 24.* A sad complaint of the judgments of God which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and by which they were brought almost to utter ruin, *ver. 7—9.* 3. A just rejection of those shows and shadows of religion which they kept up among them, notwithstanding this general defection and apostacy, *ver. 10—15.* (4.) An earnest call to repentance and reformation, setting before them life and death; life if they complied with the call, and death if they did not, *ver. 18—20.* 5. A threatening of ruin to those that would not be reformed, *ver. 24—28—31.* 6. A promise of a happy reformation at last, and a return of their primitive purity and prosperity, *ver. 25—27.* And all this is to be applied by us, not only to the communities we are members of, in their public interests, but to the state of our own souls.

1. **T**HE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Here is, 1. The name of the prophet, Isaiah; or Jesaihu, for so it is in the Hebrew; which in the New Testament is read Esaias. His name signifies, *the salvation of the Lord.* A proper name for a prophet, by whom God gives knowledge of salvation to his people, especially for this prophet who prophesies so much of Jesus the Saviour, and the great salvation wrought out by him. He is said to be the son of Amoz; not Amos the prophet, the two names in the Hebrew differ more than in the English: but, as the Jews think, of Amoz the brother or son of Amaziah king of Judah; a tradition as uncertain, as that rule which they give, that where a prophet's father is named, he also was himself a prophet. The prophet's pupils and successors are indeed often called their sons, but we have few instances, if any, of their own sons being their successors.

2. The nature of the prophecy: it is a vision, being revealed to him in a vision when he was awake, *heard the words of God and saw the vision of the Almighty*, as Balaam speaks, *Numb. xxiv. 4.* though perhaps it was not so illustrious a vision at first, as that afterwards, *chap. vi. 1.* The prophets were called seers or seeing-men, and therefore their prophecies were fitly called visions. It was what he saw with the eyes of his mind, and foresaw as clearly by divine revelation, was as well assured of it, as fully apprised of it, and as much affected with it, as if he had seen it with his bodily eye. Note, 1. God's prophets saw what they spoke of, knew what they said, and require our belief of nothing but what they themselves believed and were sure of, *John vi. 69. 1 John i. 1.* 2. They could not but speak what they saw; because they saw how much all about them were concerned in it. *Acts iv. 20. 2 Cor. iv. 13.*

3. The subject of the prophecy: it was what he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, the country of the two tribes, and that city which was their metropolis; and there is little in it relating to Ephraim, or the ten tribes, as there is in the prophecy of Hosea. Some chapters there are in this book which relate to Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, and some other neighbouring nations, but it takes its title from that which is the greatest part of it, concerning Judah and Jerusalem: and the other nations spoken of are such as the people of the Jews had concerns with. Isaiah brings to them in a special manner, (1.) Instruction, for it is the privilege of Judah and Jerusalem, and to them pertain the oracles of God. (2.) Reproof and threatening; for if in Judah, where God is known, if in Salem, where his name is great, iniquity be found, they sooner than any other shall be reckoned with for it. (3.) Comfort and encouragement in evil times, for the children of Sion shall be joyful in their king.

4. The date of the prophecy: he prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. By this it appears, (1.) That he prophesied long; especially if (as the Jews say) he was at last put to death by Manasseh, to a cruel death, being sawn asunder; to which some suppose the apostle refers, *Heb. xi. 37.* From the year that king Uzziah died, *chap. vi. 1.* to Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, was 47 years; how much before and after he prophesied is not certain: some reckon 60, others 80 years in all: it was an honour to him, and a happiness to his country, that he was continued so long in his usefulness: and we must suppose both that he began young, and that he held out to old age; for the prophets were not tied as the priests were, to a certain age for the beginning or ending of the ministration. (2.) That he passed through variety of times: Jotham was a good king, and Hezekiah a better, who no doubt gave encouragement to, and took advice from this prophet; were patrons to him, and he a privy-counsellor to them; but between them, and when Isaiah was in the prime of his time, the reign of Ahaz was very prophane and wicked; then, no doubt, he was frowned upon at court, and, it is likely, forced to abscond: good men and good ministers must expect bad times in this world and prepare for them. Then religion was run down to that degree, that the doors of the house of the Lord were shut up, and idolatrous altars were erected in every corner of Jerusalem;

and Isaiah, with all his divine eloquence and messages immediately from God himself, could not help it. The best men, the best ministers, cannot do the good they would do in the world.

3. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. 3. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 4. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the holy one of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. 5. ¶ Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. 7. Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as overthrown by strangers. 8. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a beleagued city. 9. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

We will hope to meet with a brighter and more pleasant scene before we come to the end of this book; but truly here in the beginning of it every thing looks very bad, very black with Judah and Jerusalem. What is the wilderness of the world, if the church, the vineyard, have such a dismal aspect as this here?

1. The prophet, though he speaks in God's name, yet despairing to gain audience with the children of his people; addresseth himself to the heavens and the earth, and bespeaks their attention, *ver. 2. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!* Sooner will the inanimate creatures hear, who observe the law and answer the end of their creation, than this stupid, senseless people. Let the lights of heaven shame their darkness, and the fruitfulness of the earth their barrenness, and the strictness of each to their time, their irregularity. Moses begins thus, *Deut. xxxii. 1.* to which the prophet here refers, intimating, that now those times were come which Moses there foretold, *Deut. xxxi. 29.* Or this is an appeal to heaven and earth, to angels, and then to the inhabitants of the upper and lower world; let them judge between God and his vineyard: can either produce such an instance of ingratitude? Note, God will be justified when he speaks, and both heaven and earth shall declare his righteousness, *Mich. vi. 1, 2. Psal. l. 6.*

2. He chargeth them with base ingratitude, a crime of the highest nature; call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse: let heaven and earth hear, and wonder at, (1.) God's gracious dealings with such a peevish, provoking people as they were. I have nourished and brought them up as children; they have been well fed and well taught, *Deut. xxxii. 6.* I have magnified and exalted them, so some; not only made them grow, but made them great; not only maintained them, but preferred them; not only trained them up, but raised them high. Note, We owe the continuance of our lives and comforts and all our advancements to God's fatherly care of us and kindness to us: (2.) Their ill-natured carriage towards him, who was so tender of them, *they have rebelled against me*, (or, as some read it,) they have revolted from me; they have been deserters, nay, traitors against his crown and dignity. Note, All the instances of God's favour to us, as the God both of our nature and our nurture, aggravate our treacherous departures from him, and all our presumptuous oppositions of him: children; and yet rebels!

3. He attributes this to their ignorance and inconsideration: *ver. 3.* The ox knows, but Israel doth not. Observe, (1.) The sagacity of the ox and the ass, which are not only brute creatures, but of the dullest sort: and yet the ox hath such a sense of duty, as to know his owner and to serve him; to submit to his yoke and to draw in it: the ass hath such a sense of interest as to know his master's crib or manger where he is fed, and to abide by it: he will go to that of himself if he turn him loose. A fine pass man is come to, when he is shamed even in knowledge and understanding by these silly animals; and is not only sent to school to them, *Prov. vi. 6, 7.* but let in a form below them, *Ser. viii. 7. taught more than the beasts of the earth.* Job. xxxv. 11. and yet knowing less. (2.) The foolishness and stupidity of Israel: God is their owner and proprietor, he made us, and his we are more than our cattle are, our's: he has provided well for us; providing is our master's crib: yet many that are called the people of God do not know, and will not consider this; but ask, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* He is none of our owner: and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him? He hath no crib for us to feed at. He had complained, *ver. 2.* of the obstinacy of their will, *they have rebelled against me*: here he runs it up to its cause; therefore they have rebelled, because they do not know, they do not consider. The understanding is darkened, and therefore the whole soul is alienated from the life of God, *Eph. iv. 28. Israel doth not know*, though their land was a land of light and knowledge, *in Judah is God known*, yet because they do not live up to what they know, it is in effect as if they did not know. They know, but their knowledge doth them no good, because they do not consider what they know; they do not

not apply it to their case, nor their minds to it. Note, (1.) Even among those that profess themselves God's people, that have the advantages and lie under the engagements of his people, yet there are many that are very careless in the affairs of their souls. (2.) In consideration of what we do know, is as great an enemy to us in religion as ignorance of what we should know. (3.) Therefore men revolt from God, and rebel against him, because they do not know and consider their obligations to God, in duty, gratitude, and interest.

4. He laments the universal pravity and corruption of their church and kingdom: the disease of sin was epidemical, and all orders and degrees of men were infected with it. *Alas, sinful nation!* ver. 4. The prophet bemoans those that would not bemoan themselves: ah, alas for them, woe to them; he speaks with a holy indignation at their degeneracy, and a dread of the consequences of it. See here.

(1.) How he aggravates their sin, and shews the malignity that there was in it, ver. 4. (1.) The wickedness was universal; they were a sinful nation, the generality of the people were vicious and prophane; they were so in their national capacity, in the management of their public treaties abroad, and in the administration of public justice at home they were corrupt. Note, It is ill with a people when sin becomes national. (2.) It was very great and heinous in its nature. They were laden with iniquity, the guilt of it, and the curse incurred by that guilt lay very heavy upon them; it was a heavy charge that was exhibited against them, which they could never clear themselves from, their wickedness was upon them as a *talent of lead*, Zech. v. 7, 8. And their sin as it did easily beset them, and they were prone to it, was a weight upon them, Heb. xii. 1. (3.) They came of an ill breed, were a seed of evil doers; treachery run in the blood, they had it by kind, which made the matter so much the worse, more provoking and less curable; they rose up in their fathers' stead, and trod in their fathers' steps, to fill up the measure of their iniquity, Num. xxii. 14. they were a race and family of rebels. (4.) They that were themselves debauched, did what they could to debauch others: they are not only corrupt children, born tainted, but *children that are corrupters*, that propagate vice, and infect others with it; not only sinners but tempters, not only acted by Satan, but agents for him. If those that are called children, God's children, that are looked upon as belonging to his family, be wicked and vile, their example is the most malignant influence. 5. Their sin was a treacherous departure from God, they were deserters from their allegiance, *they have forsaken the Lord*, to whom they had joined themselves, they are gone away backward, are alienated or separated from God, have turned the back upon him, run their colours, and quitted their service; when they were urged forward they run backward, as a *bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, Hos. iv. 16. (6.) It was an impudent and daring defiance of him, *they have provoked the holy One of Israel unto anger*, willfully and designedly; they knew that would anger him, and that they did. Note, The backslidings of those that have professed religion and relation to God, are in a special manner provoking to him.

(2.) How he illustrates it by a comparison taken from a sick and diseased body, all overspread with leprosy, or like Job's, with sore boils, ver. 5, 6. (1.) The distemper hath seized the vitals, and so threatens to be mortal. Diseases in the head and heart are most dangerous; now the head, the whole head is sick, the heart, the whole heart is faint; they were become corrupt in their judgment, the leprosy was in their head, they were utterly unclean; their affection to God and religion was cold and gone; the things which remained were ready to die away, Rev. iii. 2. (2.) It hath overspread the whole body, and so becomes exceeding noisome, from the sole of the foot even unto the head, from the meanest peasant to the greatest peer, there is no soundness, no good principles, no religion, for that is the health of the soul; nothing but wounds and bruises, guilt and corruption, the sad effects of Adam's fall! noisome to the holy God, painful to the precious soul; they were so to David when he complained, *Psal. xxxviii. 5. My wounds pink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness*, *Psal. xxxii. 3, 4.* No attempts were made for reformation, or if they were, they proved ineffectual, the wounds have not been closed nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment. While sin remains unrepented of, the wounds are unsearched, unwashed, the proud flesh in them not cut out; and while consequently it remains unpardoned, the wounds are not mollified or closed up, nor any thing done towards the healing of them, and the preventing the fatal consequences of them.

5. He sadly bewails the judgments of God which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and their incorrigibleness under those judgments.

(1.) Their kingdom was almost ruined, ver. 7. So miserable were they, that both their towns and their lands were wasted, and yet so stupid, that they needed to be told this, and to have it shewed them. Look, and see how it is; your country is desolate, the ground is not cultivated for want of inhabitants, the villages being deserted, *Judg. v. 7.* and thus the fields and vineyards become like deserts, *all grown over with thorns*, Prov. xxiv. 31. *Your cities are burnt with fire*, by the enemies that invade you; fire and sword commonly go together; as for the fruits of your land, which should be food for your families, strangers devour them; and to your greater vexation it is before your eyes, and you cannot prevent it; you starve while your enemies surfeit on that which should be your maintenance. The overthrow of your country is a. the overthrow of strangers; it is used by the invaders, as one might expect it should be used by strangers. Jerusalem itself, which was as the daughter of Zion, the temple built on Zion, was a mother, a nursing mother to Jerusalem: or Zion itself the holy mountain, which had been dear to God as a daughter, was now lost, deserted, and exposed as a cottage in a vineyard, which when the vintage is over nobody dwells in or takes any care of, and looks as mean and despicable as a lodge or hut in a garden of cucumbers: and every body is afraid of coming near it; and solicitous to remove their effects out of it, as if it were a besieged city, ver. 8. And some think it is the calamitous state of the kingdom, that is represented by a diseased body, ver. 6. Probably this sermon was preached in the reign of Ahaz, when Judah was invaded by the kings of Syria and Israel, the Edomites, and the Philistines, who slew many, and carried many away into captivity, 2 Chron. xxviii. 5—17—18. Note, National impiety and immorality bring national desolation. Canaan, the glory of all lands, Mount Zion the joy of the whole earth, both became a reproach and a ruin, and sin hath made them so, that great mischief-maker.

(2.) Yet they were not at all reformed, and therefore God threatens to make another course with them, ver. 3. *Why should you be pricked any more with an expectation of doing you good by it*, when you increase revolts, as rebukes are increased? *you will revolt more and more*, as you have done as Ahaz particularly did, who in his distress tresspassed yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxvii. 22. Thus the physician when he sees the patient's case desperate, troubles him no more with physic; and the father resolves to correct his child no more, when finding him hardened he determines to disinherit him. Note, 1. There are those who are made worse by the methods God takes to make them better; the more they are stricken the more they revolt, their corruptions instead of being mortified, and irritated and exasperated by their afflictions, and their hearts more hardened. 2. And sometimes in a way of righteous judgment ceaseth to correct those who

have been loud incorrigible, and whom therefore he designs to destroy. The reprobate silver shall be cast, not into the furnace, but to the dunghill, Jer. vi. 29, 30. See Ezek. xxiv. 13. Hos. iv. 14. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.

6. He comforts himself with the consideration of a remnant that should be the monuments of divine grace and mercy, notwithstanding this general corruption and desolation, ver. 9. See here, (1.) How near they were to an utter extirpation; they were almost like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect both of sin and ruin, grown almost so bad as that there could not have been found *ten righteous men among them*, and almost so miserable as that none had been left alive, but their country turned into a fulfurous lake. Divine justice said, *make them as Admah, set them as Zeboim*; but mercy said, *how shall I do it?* Hos. xi. 8, 9. (2.) What it was that saved them from it, the Lord of hosts left unto them a very small remnant, that were kept pure from the common apostasy, and kept safe and alive from the common calamity. This is quoted by the apostle, Rom. ix. 29. and applied to those few of the Jewish nation who in his time embraced Christianity, when the body of the people rejected it, and in whom the promises made to the fathers were accomplished. Note, 1. In the worst of times there is a remnant preserved from iniquity and reserved for mercy, as Noah and his family in the deluge, Lot and his in the destruction of Sodom. Divine grace triumphs in distinguishing by an act of sovereignty. 2. This remnant is often a very small one in comparison with the vast numbers of revolting, ruined sinners. Multitude is no mark of the true church; Christ's is a little flock. 3. It is God's work to sanctify and save some, when others are left to perish in their impurity; it is the work of his power as the Lord of hosts; except he had left us that remnant, there had been none left; the corrupters (ver. 4.) did what they could to debauch all, and the devourers (ver. 7.) to destroy all, and had prevailed if God himself had not interposed to secure to himself a remnant who are bound to give him all the glory. 4. It is good for a people that have been saved from utter ruin, to look back and see how near they were to it, just upon the brink of it, to see how much they owed to a few good men that stood in the gap, and that that was owing to a good God who left them these good men. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.*

10. ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. 11. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offering of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. 12. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? 13. Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination to me, the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14. Your new-moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. 15. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Here, 1. God calls to them (but calls in vain) to hear his word, ver. 10. (1.) The title he gives them is very strange, *ye rulers of Sodom, and ye people of Gomorrah*. This intimates what a righteous thing it had been with God to make them like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect of ruin, ver. 9. because they had made themselves like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect of sin. The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly, Gen. xiii. 13. and so were the men of Judah; when the rulers were bad, no wonder the people were so. Vice overpowered virtue, for it had the rulers, the men of figure on its side, and it out-polluted it, for it had the people, the men of number on its side: the streams being thus strong, no less a power than that of the Lord of hosts could secure a remnant, ver. 9. The rulers are boldly attacked here by the prophet, as rulers of Sodom, for he knew not to give flattering titles; the tradition of the Jews is, that for this he was attainted against long after and put to death, as having cursed the gods, and spoken evil of the ruler of his people.

(2.) His demand upon them is very reasonable, *hear the word of the Lord, and give ear to the law of our God*, attend to that which God has to say to you, and let his word be a law to you. The following declaration of dislike to their sacrifices, would be a kind of new law to them, though really it was but an explication of the old law; but special regard is to be had to it, as is required to the like, *Psal. l. 7, 8.* Hear this and tremble, hear it and take warning.

2. He justly refuseth to hear their prayers and accept their services; their sacrifices and burnt-offerings, the fat and blood of them, ver. 11. their attendance in his courts, ver. 12. their oblations, their incense, and their solemn assemblies, ver. 13. their new-moons, and their appointed feasts, ver. 14. their devoted addresses, ver. 15. They are all rejected because their hands were full of blood. Now observe,

1. There are many who are strangers, nay, enemies to the power of religion, and yet seem very zealous for the show, and shadow, and form of it. This sinful nation, this seed of evil-doers, these rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah brought, not to the altars of false gods, (they are not here charged with that) but to the altars of the God of Israel, sacrifices, a multitude of them, as many as the law required, and rather more; not only peace-offerings, which they themselves had their share of, but burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed to the honour of God, nor did they bring the torn, and lame, and sick, but fed beasts, and the fat of them, the best of the kind: they did not send others to offer their sacrifices for them, but came themselves to appear before God; they observed the instituted places, not in high places or groves, but in God's own courts; and the instituted time, the new-moons and sabbaths and appointed feasts, none of which they omitted; nay, it should seem they called extraordinary assemblies, and held solemn meetings for religious worship, beside those that God had appointed; yet this was not all, they applied themselves to God not only with their ceremonial observances, but with the moral instances of devotion, they prayed, they prayed often, made many prayers, thinking they should be heard for their much speaking; nay, they were fervent and importunate in prayer, they spread forth their hands as men in earnest. Now we would have thought these, and no doubt they thought themselves pious, religious people, and yet far from being so, for, (1.) Their hearts were empty of true devotion; they came to appear before God, ver. 12. to be seen before him, so the margin reads it, they rested on the outside of the duties, they looked no farther than to be seen of men, and went no farther than that which

men see. (2.) Their hands were full of blood; *i. e.* they were guilty of murder, rapine, and oppression, under colour of law and justice. The people shed blood, and the rulers did not punish them for it; the rulers shed blood, and the people were a ding and abetting, as the elders of Jezreel were to Jezebel in shedding Naboth's blood. Malice is heart murder in the account of God; he that hateth his brother in his heart, hath in effect his hands full of blood.

2. When sinners are under the judgments of God, they will easier be brought to fly to their devotions, than to forsake their sins and reform their lives. Their country was now desolate, and their cities burnt, *ver.* 7. and this awakened them to bring their sacrifices and offerings to God more constantly than they had done, as if they would bribe God Almighty to remove the punishment, and give them leave to go on in the sin. *When he flecth them, then they sought him,* Psalm. lxxviii. 34. *Lord, in trouble have they sought thee,* Isa. xxi. 10. Many that will readily part with their sacrifices, yet will not be persuaded to part with their sins.

3. The most pompous and costly devotions of wicked people, without a thorough reformation of the heart and life, are so far from being acceptable to God, that really they are an abomination to him. This is shewed here in a great variety of expostitions, that *to obey is better than sacrifice*; nay, that sacrifice without obedience is a jest, it is an affront and provocation to God. The comparative neglect, which God here exposteth of ceremonial observances, was a tacit intimation what they would come to at last, when they would all be done away by the death of Christ; what was now made little of, would in due time be made nothing of; sacrifice and offering, and prayer made in virtue of that, thou *wouldest not*; then said I, *lo, I come.* Their sacrifices are here represented,

1. As fruitless and insignificant. To what purpose is it? *ver.* 11. they are *vain oblations*, *ver.* 13. *In vain do they worship me,* Matt. xv. 9. It was all lost labour, and served not to answer any good intention; for, (1.) it was not looked upon as any act of duty or obedience to God; *Who has required these things at your hands?* *ver.* 12. Not that God disowns his institutions, or refuseth to stand by his own warrants, but in what they did, they had not an eye to him that requires it; nor indeed did he require it of them whose hands were full of blood, and continue impenitent. (2.) It did not recommend them to God's favour, he delighted not in the blood of their sacrifices, for he did not look upon himself as honoured by it. (3.) It would not obtain any relief for them. They pray, but God will not hear, because they regard iniquity, *Psal.* lxvi. 18. he will not deliver them, for though they make many prayers, they none of them come from an upright heart. All their religious services turned to no account to them. Nay,

2. As odious and offensive; God did not only not accept them, but he did detest and abhor them. They are your sacrifices, they are a snare of mine; I am full of them, even surfeited with them; he heeded them not, *Psal.* l. 10. did not desire them, had had enough of them, and more than enough. Their coming into his courts he calls treading them or trampling upon them, their very attendance on his ordinances was construed as an attempt of them. Their incense, though never so fragrant, was an abomination to him, for it was burnt in hypocrisy and with an ill design. Their solemn assemblies he could not away with, could not see them with any patience, nor bear the affront they gave him. The solemn meeting is iniquity, though the thing itself was not, yet as they managed it, it was. It is a vexation (so some read it) a provocation to God to have ordinances thus prostituted, not only to wicked people, but to wicked purposes. My soul hates them, they are a trouble to me, a burden, an incumbrance, I am perfectly sick of them and weary to hear them; he is never weary of hearing the prayers of the upright, but soon weary of the costly sacrifices of the wicked. He hides his eyes from their prayers, as that which he has an aversion to and is angry at.

All this is to shew, (1.) That sin is very hateful to God, so hateful that it makes even men's prayers and their religious services hateful to him. (2.) That dissimulated piety is double iniquity. Hypocrisy in religion is of all things most abominable to the God of heaven. Jerom applies it to the Jews in Christ's time, who pretended a great zeal for the law and the temple, but made themselves and all their services abominable to God, by filling their hands with the blood of Christ and his apostles, and so filling up the measure of their iniquities.

16. ¶ Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, 17. Learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. 19. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. 20. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Though God had rejected their services as insufficient to atone for their sins while they persisted in them, yet he doth not reject them as in a hopeless condition; but here calls upon them to forsake their sins, which hindered the acceptance of their services, and then all would be well. Let them not say God picked quarrels with them, no, he proposeth a method of reconciliation. Observe here,

1. A call to repentance and reformation. If you would have your sacrifices accepted and your prayers answered, you must begin your work at the right end; *Be converted to my law*, so the Chaldees begins this exhortation; make conscience of second-table duties, else expect not to be accepted in the acts of your devotion. As justice and charity will never atone for atheism and profaneness, so prayers and sacrifices will never atone for fraud and oppression; for righteousness towards men is as much a branch of pure religion, as religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness.

(1.) They must cease to do evil, must do no more wrong, shed no more innocent blood; that is the meaning of washing them and *making them clean*, *ver.* 16. It is not only sorrowing for the sin they had committed, but breaking off the practice of it for the future, and mortifying all those vicious affections and dispositions which inclined them to it. Sin is defiling of the soul, our business is to wash us from it by repenting of it, and turning from it to God. We must put away not only that evil of our doings, which is before the eye of the world, by refraining from the gross acts of sin, but that which is before God's eyes, the roots and habits of sin that are in our hearts; those must be crushed and mortified.

(2.) They must learn to do well. This was necessary to the completing of their repentance. For, it is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. (1.) We must be doing: not cease to do evil

and then stand idle. (2.) We must be doing good, the good which the Lord our God requires, and which will turn to a good account. (3.) We must do it well, in a right manner, and for a right end: and (4.) We must learn to do it well, we must take pains to get the knowledge of our duty, be inquisitive concerning it, in care about it, and accustom ourselves to it, that we may readily turn our hands to our work, and become masters of this holy art of doing well.

He urged them particularly to those instances of well-doing, wherein they have been defective, to second-table duties; *Seek judgment*, enquire what is right that we may do it, be solicitous to be found in the way of our duty, and do not walk all adventures. Seek opportunities of doing good. *Relieve the oppressed*, those whom you yourselves have oppressed, ease them of their burdens. *Isa.* lviii. 6. You that have power in your hands, use it for the relief of those whom others do oppress, for that is your business; right those that suffer wrong; in a special manner concern yourselves for the fatherless and the widow, whom because they are weak and helpless, proud men trample upon and abuse, do you appear for them at the bar, on the bench, as there is occasion; speak for those that know not how to speak for themselves, and that have not wherewithal to gratify you for your kindness. Note, We are truly honouring God when we are doing good in the world; and acts of justice and charity are more pleasing to him than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

2. A demonstration at the bar of right reason, of the equity of God's proceedings with them, *Come now, and let us reason together*, *ver.* 18. while your hands are full of blood, I will have nothing to do with you, though you bring me a multitude of sacrifices; but if you wash you and make you clean, you are welcome to draw nigh to me; come now, and let us talk the matter over. Note, Those, and those only that break off their league with sin, shall be welcome into covenant and communion with God; he saith, come now, who before forbid them who looked upon themselves as rather thus; there were those among them who looked upon themselves as affronted by the slights put upon the multitude of their sacrifices, as *Isa.* lviii. 3. *Wherefore have we fasted* (say they) *and thou seest not?* they represented God as a hard master, whom it was impossible to please; come, saith God, let us debate the matter fairly, and I doubt not but to make it out that *my ways are equal, but your's are unequal*, *Ezek.* xviii. 25. Note, 1. Religion hath reason on its side; there is all the reason in the world that we should do as God would have us do. 2. The God of heaven condescends to reason the case with those that contradict him and find fault with his proceedings: for *he will be justified when he speaks*, *Psal.* li. 4. The case needs only to be stated, (as it is here very fairly,) and it will determine itself. God shews here upon what terms they stood, as he doth, *Ezek.* xviii. 21—24. *xviii.* 18, 19, and then leaves it to them to judge whether they were not so.

1. They cannot in reason expect any more than that if they repent and reform they should be restored to God's favour, notwithstanding their former provocations; why, this you may expect, saith God, and it is very kind; who could have the face to desire it upon any other terms? (1.) It is very little that is required, only that you be willing and obedient; that you consent to obey, so some read it; that you subject your wills to the will of God, acquiesce in that, and give up yourselves in all things to be ruled by him that is infinitely wise and good. Here is no penance imposed nor task for our stubbornness, nor the yoke made heavier or bound harder on their necks; only whereas hitherto you have been perverse and refractory, and would not comply with that which was for your own good, now be tractable, be governable. He doth not say, If you be perfectly obedient, but willing, for if there be a willing mind it is accepted. (2.) It is very great that is promised hereupon. 1. That all their sins should be pardoned to them, and should not be mentioned against them. Though they be as red as scarlet and crimson, *i. e.* though you lie under the guilt of blood, yet, upon your repentance, even that shall be forgiven you, and you shall appear in the sight of God as white as snow. Note, The greatest sinners, if they truly repent, shall have their sins forgiven them, and so have their consciences pacified and purified. Though your sins have been as scarlet and crimson, a deep dye, a double dye, first in the wool of original corruption, and afterwards in the many threads of actual transgression; though we have been often dipped, by our many backslidings into sin; and though we have lain long soaking in it, as the cloth doth in the scarlet dye: yet pardoning mercy will thoroughly discharge the stain, and being by it purged as *with hyssop, we shall be clean*, *Psal.* li. 7. If we make us clean by repentance and reformation, *ver.* 16. God will make us white by a full remission. 2. That they should have all the happiness and comfort they could desire: be but willing and obedient, and *ye shall eat the good of the land*, the land of promise; you have shall all the blessings of the new covenant, of the heavenly Canaan; all the good of that land. They that go on in sin, though they dwell in a good land, cannot with any comfort eat the good of it, guilt imbibers all; but if sin be pardoned, creature comforts become comforts indeed.

2. They cannot in reason expect any other, than that if they continue obstinate in their disobedience, they should be abandoned to ruin, and the sentence of the law should be executed upon them: what can be more just? *ver.* 20. *If ye refuse and rebel*, if you continue to rebel against the divine government, and refuse the offers of divine grace, *ye shall be devoured with the sword*: with the sword of your enemies which shall be commissioned to destroy you, with the sword of God's justice; his wrath and vengeance, which shall be drawn against you; for this is that which *the mouth of the Lord hath spoken*, and which he will make good for the maintaining of his own honour. Note, Those that will not be governed by God's scepter, will certainly and justly be devoured by his sword.

And now life and death, good and evil, are thus set before you; *Come, and let us reason together*: What have you to object against the equity of this? or against complying with God's terms?

21. ¶ How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. 22. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixt with water: 23. Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth gifts and followeth after rewards; they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. 24. Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies. 25. ¶ And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy iniquity. 26. And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning; afterward thou shalt be called

called. The city of righteousness, the faithful city. 27. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. 28. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. 29. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. 30. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. 31. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

Here, 1. The woe of degeneracy of Judah and Jerusalem is sadly lamented; See (1.) What the royal city has been; a faithful city, faithful to God and the interests of his kingdom among men; faithful to the nation and the public interests of that; *It was full of judgment*, justice was duly administered upon the thrones of judgment which were set there, the thrones of the house of David, Psalm cxvii. 5. Men were generally honest in their dealings and abhorred to do an unjust thing; righteousness lodged in it, was constantly resident in their palaces and in their dwellings; not called in now and then to serve a turn, but at home there. Note, Neither holy cities, nor royal ones; neither places where religion is professed, nor places where government is administered, are faithful to their trust, if religion do not dwell in them. (2.) What it was now become; that beautiful, virtuous spouse was now debauched and become an adulteress; righteousness no longer dwelt in Jerusalem (*terras Atræ reliquit*). Even murderers were unpunished and lived undisturbed there: nay, the princes themselves were so cruel and oppressive, that they were become no better than murderers; an innocent man might better guard himself against a troop of banditti or assassins, than against a bench of such judges. Note, it is a great aggravation of the wickedness of any family or people, that their ancestors were famed for virtue and probity; and commonly those that thus degenerate, prove the most wicked of all other; *Corruptio optimi est pessima*: Luke xi. 26. Eccl. iii. 16. See Jer. xxii. 15, 16, 17.

This is illustrated, (1.) By similitudes; ver. 22. *Thy silver is become dross*: this degeneracy of the magistrates, whose character is the reverie of that of their predecessors, is as great a reproach and injury to the kingdom, as the abasing of their coin would be, and the turning of their silver into dross. Righteous princes and righteous cities, are as silver for the treasury; but unrighteous ones are as dross for the dunghill: *How is the gold become dim!* Lam. iv. 1. *Thy wine is mixed with water*, and so is become flat and sour. Some understand both these literally; the wine they sold was adulterated, it was half water; the money they paid was counterfeit, and so they cheated all they dealt with: but it is rather to be taken figuratively; justice was perverted by their princes; and religion and the word of God sophisticated by their priests, and made to serve what turn they pleased. Dross may shine like silver, and the wine that is mixed with water may retain the colour of wine, but neither are worth any thing. Thus they retained a show and pretence of virtue and justice, but had no true sense of either. (2.) By some instances, ver. 23. The princes, that should keep others in their allegiance to God and subjection to his law, are themselves rebellious, and set God and his law at defiance: they that should restrain thieves, proud and rich oppressors, those worst of robbers, and those that designedly cheat their creditors, who are no better, they are themselves companions of thieves, connive at them, do as they do, and with greater security and success, because they are princes, and have power in their hands: they share with the thieves they protect in this unlawful gain, Psalm i. 18. and *cast in their lot among them*, Prov. i. 13, 14. (1.) The profit of their places is all their aim; to make the best hand they can of them, right or wrong. They love gifts, and follow after rewards: they set their hearts upon their salary, the fees and perquisites of their offices, and are greedy of them, and never think they can get enough: nay, they will do any thing, though never so contrary to law and justice, for a gift in secret. Presents and gratuities will blind their eyes at any time, and make them pervert judgment; these they love and are eager in the pursuit of. Hos. iv. 18. (2.) The duty of their places is none of their care: they ought to protect those that are injured, and take cognizance of the appeals made to them: why else were they preferred? But *they judge not the fatherless*, take no care to guard the orphans, nor doth the cause of the widow come unto them; because the poor widow has no bribe to give, with which to make way for her, and to bring her cause on. Those will have a great deal to answer for, who when they should be the patrons of the oppressed, are their greatest oppressors.

2. A resolution is taken up to redress these grievances; ver. 24. *Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel*; who has power to make good what he saith, who hath hosts at command for the executing of his purposes, and whose power is engaged for his Israel; *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries*. Observe, (1.) Wicked people, especially wicked rulers that are cruel and oppressive, are God's enemies, his adversaries, and shall be so accounted of, and so dealt with. If the holy seed corrupt themselves, they are the foes of his own house. (2.) They are a burden to the God of heaven, which is implied in his easing himself of them; *the mighty One of Israel*, that can hear any thing, nay, that upholds all things, complains of his being wearied with men's inquiries, Isa. xliii. 24. Amos ii. 13. (3.) God will find out time and way to ease himself of this burden, by avenging himself on those that thus bear hard upon his patience. He here speaks of one triumphing of the foresight of it; *Ah, I will ease me*: he will ease the earth of its burden under which it groans, Rom. viii. 21, 22. will ease his own name of the reproaches with which it is loaded: He will be eased of his adversaries, by taking vengeance on his enemies: he will spue them out of his mouth, and so be eased of them, Rev. iii. 16. He speaks with pleasure of the day of vengeance being in his heart, Isa. lxiii. 4. If God's professing people conform not to his image, as the *holy One of Israel*, ver. 4. they shall feel the weight of his hand as the *mighty One of Israel*: His power that used to be engaged for them, shall be armed against them.

Two ways God will ease himself of this grievance:

1. By reforming his church, and restoring good judges in the name of those corrupt ones: Though the one hath a great deal of dross in it, yet it shall not be thrown away, but refined; ver. 25. *I will surely purge away thy dross*; i. e. will amend what is amiss; Vice and profaneness shall be suppressed, and put out of countenance: oppressors displaced, and deprived of their power to do mischief: When things are never so bad, God can set them to rights, and bring about a complete reformation; when he begins he will make an end, will take away all the sin.

Observe, (1.) The reformation of a people is God's own work: and if ever it be done, it is he that brings it about: *I will turn my hand upon thee*; i. e. will do that for the reviving of religion, which I did at first for the

planting of it. He can do it easily, with the turn of his hand: but he doth it effectually, for what opposition can stand before the arm of the Lord revealed. (2.) He doth it by blessing them with good magistrates, and good ministers of state: ver. 26. *I will restore thy judges, as at the first*, and put the laws into execution against evil-doers; and thy counsellors to transact public affairs, as at the beginning; either the same persons that had been turned out, or others of the same character. (3.) He doth it by restoring judgment and righteousness among them, ver. 27. by planting in men's minds principles of justice, and governing their lives by those principles. Men may do much by external restraints: but God doth it effectually by the influences of his Spirit, as a *spirit of judgment*, chap. iv. 4. and xxviii. 6. See Psalm lxxxv. 10, 11. (4.) The reformation of a people will be the redemption of them and their converts; for sin is the worst captivity, the worst slavery, and the great and eternal redemption is that by which Israel is redeemed, from all his iniquities; Phil. exxx. 8. and he, the blessed Redeemer, that turns away ungodliness from Jacob, Rom. xi. 26. and saves his people from their sins, Matt. i. 21. All the redeemed of the Lord shall be converts, and their conversion is their redemption. Her converts, or they that return to her; so the margin; God works deliverance for us, by preparing us for it with judgment and righteousness. (5.) The reviving of a people's virtue is the restoring of their honour: *Afterwards thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city*: i. e. Thou shalt be so; the reforming of the magistracy is a good step towards the reforming of the city and the country too. 2. Thou shalt have the praise of being so, and a greater praise there cannot be to any city, than to be called the city of righteousness; and to retrieve the ancient honour which was lost, when the faithful city became an harlot, ver. 21.

2. By cutting off those that hate to be reformed, that they may not remain either as snares, or as scandals to the faithful city. (1.) It is an utter ruin that is here threatened: They shall be destroyed and consumed, and not chastened and corrected only. The extirpation of them will be necessary to the redemption of Zion. (2.) It is an universal ruin, which will involve the transgressors and the sinners together; i. e. the openly profane that have quite cast off all religion, and the hypocrites that live wicked lives under the cloak of a religious profession, they shall both be destroyed together; for they are both alike an abomination to God, both those that contradict religion, and those that contradict themselves in their professions to it. And they that forsake the Lord, to whom they had formerly joined themselves, shall be consumed, as the water in the conduit-pipe is soon consumed when it is cut off from the fountain. (3.) It is an inevitable ruin; there is no escaping it.

1. Their idols shall not be able to help them: The oaks that they have desired, and the gardens that they have chosen, i. e. The images, the dung-hill gods which they have worshipped in their groves, and under the green trees, which they were fond of, and wedded to; for which they forsook the true God, and which they worshipped privately in their own gardens, even then when idolatry was publicly discountenanced: This was the practice of the transgressors and the sinners; but they shall be ashamed of it, not with a show of repentance, but of despair, ver. 29. They shall have cause to be ashamed of them, for after all the court they have made to them, they shall find no benefit by them; but the idols themselves shall go into captivity, Isa. xlv. 1, 2. Note, they that make creatures their confidence, are but preparing confusion for themselves: You were fond of the oaks and the gardens but you yourselves shall be, (1.) Like an oak without leaves, withered and blasted, and stripped of all its ornaments. Justly do those wear no leaves, that bear no fruit; as the fig-tree that Christ cursed. (2.) Like a garden without water, that is neither rained upon nor watered with the foot (Deut. xi. 10.) that has no fountain, Cant. iv. 15. and consequently is parched, and all the fruit of it is gone to decay. Thus shall they be that trust in idols, or in an arm of flesh, Jer. xvii. 5, 6. But they that trust in God never find him as a wilderness, or as waters that fail, Jer. ii. 31.

2. They shall not be able to help themselves, ver. 31. *Even the strong man shall be as tow*; not only broken, and pulled to pieces, but easily catching fire, and his work (so the margin reads it) that by which he hopes to fortify and secure himself, shall be as a spark to his own tow, shall set him on fire, and he and his work shall burn together: His own counsels shall be his ruin; and his own sin kindles the fire of God's wrath, which shall burn to the lowest hell, and none shall quench it. When the sinner has made himself as tow and stubble, and God makes himself to him as a consuming fire, what can prevent the utter ruin of the sinner?

Now all this is applicable, (1.) To the blessed work of reformation, which was wrought in Hezekiah's time, after the abominable corruptions of the reign of Ahaz: Then good men came to be preferred, and the faces of the wicked were filled with shame. (2.) To their return out of their captivity in Babylon, which had thoroughly cured them of idolatry. (3.) To the gospel-kingdom, and the pouring out of the Spirit, by which the New Testament church shall be made a new Jerusalem, a city of righteousness. (4.) To the second coming of Christ, when he shall thoroughly purge his floor, his field, shall gather the wheat into his barn, into his garner, and burn the chaff, the tares, with unquenchable fire.

C H A P. II.

With this chapter begins a new sermon, which is continued in the two following chapters. The subject of this discourse is Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 1. In this chapter the prophet speaks. (1.) Of the glory of the Christians, Jerusalem, the gospel-church in the latter days, in the accession of many to it, ver. 2, 3. and the great peace it should introduce into the world, ver. 4. whence he infers the duty of the house of Jacob, ver. 5. (2.) Of the shame of the Jews, Jerusalem, as it then was, and as it would be after its rejecting of the gospel, and being rejected of God: (1.) Their sin was their shame, ver. 6—9. (2.) God by his judgment would humble them, and put them to shame, ver. 10—17. (3.) They should themselves be ashamed of their confidence in their idols, and in an arm of flesh, ver. 18—22. And now which of these Jerusalems will we be the inhabitants of? That which is full of the knowledge of God, which will be our everlasting honour, or that which is full of horses and chariots, and silver and gold, and such idols, which will in the end be our shame.

1. THE word that Isaiah the son of Amos saw, concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2. And it shall come to pass in the last day, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain

of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 5. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

The particular title of this sermon, *ver. 1.* is the same with the general title of the book, chap. i. 1. only that what is there called the vision, is here called *the word which Isaiah saw*; or the matter or thing which he saw; the truth of which he had as full an assurance of in his own mind, as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes: Or, this word was brought to him in a vision, something he saw when he received this message from God. St. John turned to *see the voice* that spake with him, *Rev. i. 12.*

This sermon begins with the prophecy relating to the last days, *i. e.* the days of the Messiah, when his kingdom should be set up in the world at the latter end of the Mosaic economy. In the last days of the earthly Jerusalem, just before the destruction of it, this heavenly Jerusalem should be erected, *Hab. xii. 22. Gal. iv. 26.* Note, (1.) Gospel-times are the last days: Not (1.) They were long in coming, were a great while waited for by the Old Testament saints, and came at last. (2.) We are not to look for any other dispensation of divine grace, but what we have in the gospel, *Gal. i. 8, 9.* (3.) We are to look for the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time, as the Old Testament saints did for his first coming; *this is the last time*, 1 John ii. 18.

Now the prophet here foretells,

1. The setting up of the Christian church, and the planting of the Christian religion in the world: Christianity shall then be the mountain of the Lord's house; where that is professed, God will grant his presence, receive his people's homage, and grant instruction and blessing, as he did of old in the temple of mount Zion: The Gospel-church incorporated by Christ's charter, shall then be the rendezvous of all the spiritual seed of Abraham. Now it is here promised, (1.) That Christianity shall be openly preached and professed; it shall be prepared (so the margin reads it) in the top of the mountains, in the view and hearing of all: Hence Christ's disciples are compared to a city on a hill, which *cannot be hid*, *Matt. v. 14.* They had many eyes upon them. Christ himself *spoke openly to the world*, *John xviii. 20.* What the apostles did, was not *done in a corner*, *Acts xxvi. 26.* It was the lighting of a beacon, the setting up of a standard: Its being every where spoken against supposeth that it was every where spoken of. (2.) That it shall be firmly fixed and rooted; it shall be established on the top of the everlasting mountains, built upon a rock, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, unless they could pluck up mountains by the roots. He that dwells lately, is said to dwell on high, *Isa. xxxiii. 16.* The Lord has found the gospel Zion. (3.) That it shall not only overcome all opposition, but over-top all computation; it shall be *exalted above the hills*: This *revelation of God in a mystery*, shall outshine all the wisdom of this world, all its philosophy and all its politics: The spiritual worship which it shall introduce, shall put down the idolatries of the heathen, and all other institutions in religion shall appear mean and despicable in comparison with this. See *Psal. lxxviii. 16.* *Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desires to dwell in.*

2. The bringing in of the Gentiles into it; (1.) The nations shall be admitted into it, even the uncircumcised which were forbidden to come into the courts of the temple at Jerusalem; the partition-wall which kept them out, kept them off, shall be taken down. (2.) *All nations shall flow into it*; having liberty of access, they shall improve their liberty, and multitudes shall embrace the Christian faith. They shall flow into it, as streams of water; which notes the abundance of converts that the gospel should make, and their speed and cheerfulness in coming into the church: They shall be forced into it, but shall naturally flow into it; *Thy people shall be willing*: all volunteers, *Psal. cx. 3.* to Christ shall the gathering of the people be, *Gen. xlix. 10.* See *Isa. lx. 4, 5.*

3. The mutual assistance and encouragement which this confluence of converts shall give to one another: Their pious affections and resolutions shall be so intermixed, as that they shall come in one full stream: As when the Jews from all parts of the country went up thrice a year to worship at Jerusalem, they called on their friends in the road, and excited them to go along with them; so shall many of the Gentiles court their relations, friends, and neighbours, to join with them in embracing the Christian religion; *ver. 3.* *Come let us go up to the mountains of the Lord*: though it be up hill, and against heart, yet it is the mountain of the Lord, who will assist the ascent of our souls towards him. Note, Those that are entering into covenant and communion with God themselves, should bring as many as they can along with them; it becomes Christians to provoke one another to good works, and to further the communion of saints by inviting one another into it: Not, *Do you go up to the mountain of the Lord, and pray for us, and we will stay at home*: Not, *We will go, and do you do as you will*; but, *Come, and let us go*, let us go in concert, that we may strengthen one another's hands, and support one another's reputation! Not, *We will consider of it, and advise about it, and go hereafter*; but, *Come, and let us go forthwith*; *Psal. cxxii. 1.* Many shall say this; those that have had it said to them, shall say it to others: The gospel-church is here called not only the mountain of the Lord, but the house of the God of Jacob; for in it God's covenant with Jacob and his praying seed is kept up, and hath its accomplishment; for to us now, as unto them, he never said, *seek ye me in vain*, *Isa. xlv. 19.*

Now see here, (1.) What they promise themselves in going up to the mountain of the Lord; *there he will teach us of his ways*. Note, God's ways are to be learned in his church, in communion with his people, and in the use of instituted ordinances; the ways of duty which he requires us to walk in, the ways of grace in which he walks towards us; It is God that teacheth his people, by his word and Spirit. And it is worth while to take pains to go up to his holy mountain, to be taught his ways; and those who are willing to take that pains, shall never find it labour in vain: *Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord*. (2.) What they promise for themselves, and one another; if he will *learn us his ways*, we will *walk in his paths*: if he will let us know our duty, we will by his grace make conscience of doing it: And those who attend God's word with this humble resolution, shall not be sent away without their lesson.

4. The means by which thus shall be brought about. *Out of Zion shall go forth the law*, the New Testament law, the law of Christ, as of old the law of Moses from mount Sinai, even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The gospel is a law, a law of faith; It is the *word of the Lord*; it went

forth from Zion, where the temple was built, and from Jerusalem: Christ himself began in Galilee, *Matt. iv. 23. Luke xxiii. 5.* But when he commissioned his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, he appointed them to begin at Jerusalem, *Luke xxiv. 47.* See *Rom. xv. 19.* Though most of them had their home in Galilee, yet they must at Jerusalem, there to receive the promise of the Spirit, *Acts i. 4.* And in the temple on mount Zion they preached the gospel, *Acts v. 20.* This honour was allowed to Jerusalem, ever after Christ was crucified there, for the sake of what it had been. And it was by his gospel which took rise from Jerusalem, that the gospel-church was established on the top of the mountains. This was the root of divine strength that was set forth out of Zion, *Psal. cx. 2.*

5. The erecting of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world; *he shall judge among the nations*: He whose word goes forth out of Zion, shall by that word not only subdue souls to himself, but rule in them, *ver. 4.* He shall in wisdom and justice order and over-rule the affairs of the world for the good of his church; and rebuke and restrain those that oppose his interest. By his Spirit working on men's consciences, he shall judge and rebuke, shall try men, and check them: his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world.

6. The great peace, which should be the effect of the success of the gospel in the world, *ver. 4.* *They shall beat their swords into ploughshares*; their instruments of war shall be converted into implements of husbandry; as, on the contrary, when war is proclaimed, *ploughshares are beaten into swords*. *Joel iii. 10.* *nation shall then not lift up sword against nation*, as now they do, *neither shall they learn war any more*, for they shall have no more occasion for it. This doth not make all war absolutely unlawful among Christians, nor is it a prophecy, that in the days of the Messiah there shall be no wars: The Jews urge this against Christians, as an argument that Jesus is not the Messiah, because this promise is not fulfilled: But, (1.) It was in part fulfilled in the peaceableness of the time in which Christ was born, when wars were in a great measure ceased: witness the taxing, *Luke ii. 1.* (2.) The design and tendency of the gospel is to make peace, and to lay all enmities: It has in it the most powerful obligations and inducements to peace; so that one might reasonably have expected it should have had this effect, and would have had it if it had not been for those lust of men from which come wars and fightings. (3.) Jews and Gentiles were reconciled, and brought together by the gospel, and there were no more such wars between them as had been: for they became *one sheepfold under one shepherd*, *Eph. ii. 15.* (4.) The gospel of Christ, as far as it prevails, disposeth men to be peaceable, softens men's spirits, and sweetens them; and the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart, constrains men to love one another. (5.) The primitive Christians were famous for brotherly-love, their very adversaries took notice of it. (6.) We have reason to hope, that this promise shall yet have a more full accomplishment in the latter times of the Christian church, when the spirit shall be poured out more plentifully from on high; Then there shall be on earth peace: *Who shall live when God doth this?* But do it he will in due time, for he is not a man, that he should lie.

Lastly, Here is a practical inference drawn from all this, *ver. 5.* *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord*: By the house of Jacob is meant either, 1. Israel according to the flesh: Let them be provoked by this to a holy emulation, *Rom. xi. 14.* Seeing the Gentiles are thus ready, and resolved for God, thus forward to go up to the house of the Lord, let us stir up ourselves to go too. Let it never be said, that the house of Jacob. Thus the zeal of some should provoke many. Or, 2. Spiritual Israel, all that are brought to the God of Jacob: Shall there be such great knowledge in gospel-times? *ver. 3.* and such great peace? *ver. 4.* and shall we share in these privileges? Come then, and let us live accordingly: Whatever others do, *Come, O Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord*: 1. Let us walk circumspectly in the light of this knowledge: Will God teach us his ways? Will he shew us his glory in the face of Christ? Let us then *walk as the children of the light and of the day*, *Eph. v. 8.* 1 Thess. v. 8. *Rom. xiii. 12.* 2. Let us walk comfortably in the light of this peace; Shall there be no more war? Let us then go on our way rejoicing, and let this joy terminate in God, and be our strength, *Neh. viii. 10.* walk in the beam of the sun of righteousness.

6. ¶ Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people, and house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are foothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. 7. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures: their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. 8. Their land also is full of idols: they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. 9. And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself; therefore forgive them not.

The calling in of the Gentiles was accompanied with the rejection of the Jews; it was their fall, and the diminishing of them, that was the riches of the Gentiles; and the casting off of them, that was the reconciling of the world, *Rom. xi. 12—15.* and it should seem that these verses have reference to that, and are designed to justify God therein; and yet, is it probable, they are primarily intended for the convincing and awakening of the men of that generation in which the prophet lived; it being usual with the prophets to speak of the things that then were both in mercy and judgment, as types of the things that should be hereafter.

Here is, 1. Israel's doom: This is set forth in two words, the first and the last of this paragraph; but they are two dreadful words, and which speak, (1.) Their case sad, very sad, *ver. 6.* *Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people*. Miserable is the condition of that people whom God hath forsaken, and great certainly must the provocation be if he forsake those that have been his own people; This was the deplorable case of the Jewish church after they had rejected Christ: *migremus hinc, your house is left unto you desolate*, *Matt. xxiii. 38.* Whenever any sore calamity came upon the Jews, thus far the Lord might be said to forsake them, that he withdrew his help and succour from them, else they had not fallen into the hands of their enemies. But God never leaves any, till they first leave him. (2.) Their case desperate, wholly desperate, *ver. 9.* *Therefore forgive thee not*. This prophetic prayer amounts to a threatening, that they should not be forgiven: and so some think it may be read; *and thou wilt not forgive them*. This refers not to particular persons, many of whom repented and were pardoned; but to the body of that nation, against whom an irreversible doom was passed that they should be wholly cut off, and their church quite dismantled, never to be formed into such a body again, nor ever to have their old charter restored to them.

2. Israel's desert of this doom, and the reasons upon which it is grounded; and

and in general it is sin; that is it, and nothing but that, which provokes God to forsake his people. The particular sins he instances in, are such as abounded among them at that time, which he makes mention of for the conviction of those to whom he then preached, rather than that which afterwards proved the measure-filling sin, their crucifying Christ, and persecuting his followers; for the sins of every age contributed towards the making up of the dreadful account at last. And there was a partial and temporary rejection of them by the captivity in Babylon hatching on, which was a type of their final destruction by the Romans, and which the sins here mentioned brought upon them.

Their sins were such as directly contradicted all God's kind and gracious designs concerning them.

1. God set them apart for himself, as a peculiar people, distinguished from, and dignified above all other people, (*Numb. xxiii. 9.*) But they were *replenished from the east*, they naturalized foreigners, not proselyted; and encouraged them to settle among them, and mingled with them, (*Hof. vii. 8.*) The country was peopled with Syrians and Chaldeans, Moabites and Ammonites, and other eastern nations, and with them they admitted the fashions and customs of those nations, and *pleased themselves in the children of strangers*, were fond of them, preferred their country before their own, and thought that the more they conformed to them, the more polite and refined they were: thus did they profane their crown and their covenant. Note, Those are in danger of being estranged from God, who please themselves with those that are strangers to him, for we soon learn the ways of those whose company we love.

2. God gave them his oracles which they might ask counsel of, not only the scriptures, and the seers, but the breast-plate of judgment; but they slighted these, and became soothsayers like the Philistines, introduced their arts of divination, and hearkened to those who by the stars, or the clouds, or the flight of birds, or the entrails of beasts, or other magic superstitions, pretended to discover things secret, or foretell things to come; the Philistines were noted for divers, (*1 Sam. vi. 2.*) Note, Those that slight true divinity, are justly given up to lying divinations; and they will certainly be forsaken of God, who thus forsake him and their own mercies for lying vanities.

3. God encouraged them to put their confidence in him, and assured them that he would be their wealth and strength; but distrustful his power and promise, they made gold their hope, and furnished themselves with horses and chariots, and relied upon them for their safety, (*ver. 7.*) God had expressly forbidden even their kings to multiply horses to themselves, and *greatly to multiply silver and gold*, because he would have them to depend upon himself only; but they did not think their interest in God made them a match for their neighbours, unless they had as full treasures of silver and gold, and as formidable hosts of chariots and horses, as they had. It is not having silver and gold, horses and chariots, that is a provocation to God, but, (1.) Desiring them insatiably, so that there is no end of the treasures, no end of the chariots, no bounds or limits set to the desire of them: Those shall never have enough in God, who alone is all sufficient, that never know when they have enough of this world, which at the best is insufficient. (2.) Depending upon them; as if we could not be safe and easy, and happy without them, and could not but be so with them.

4. God himself was their God, the sole object of their worship, and he himself instituted ordinances of worship for them; but they slighted both him and his institutions, (*ver. 8.*) their land was full of idols, every city had its god, (*Jer. xi. 13.*) and according to the goodness of their lands, they made godly images, (*Hof. x. 1.*) They that think one God too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough; for they that love idols will multiply them; so foolish were they, and so wretchedly insatuated, that they worshipped the work of their own hands; as if that could be a god to them, which was not only a creature but their creature, and that which their own fancies had devised, and their own fingers had made. It was an aggravation of their idolatry, that God had enriched them with silver and gold, and yet of that silver and gold they made idols; so it was, *Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked*, (*Hof. ii. 8.*)

5. God had advanced them, and put honour upon them, but they basely diminished and disparaged themselves, (*ver. 9.*) *The mean man boweth down to his idol*; a thing below the meanest, that have any spark of reason left them: Sin is a disparagement to the poorest, and those of the lowest rank. It becomes the mean man to bow down to his superiors, but it ill becomes him to bow down to the *jock of a tree*, (*Isa. xlii. 19.*) Nor is it only the illiterate and poor-spirited that do this, but even the great man forgets his grandeur, and humbleth himself to worship idols, deified men no better than himself, and consecrated stones so much baser than himself. Idolaters are said to *debase themselves even to hell*, (*Isa. lvii. 9.*) What a shame is it, that great men think the service of the true God below them, and will not stoop to it; and yet will humble themselves to bow down to an idol! Some make this a threatening, that the mean men shall be brought down, and the great men humbled by the judgments of God, when they come with commission.

10. ¶ Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

11. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 12. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low: 13. And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan. 14. And upon all the high mountains, upon all the hills that are lifted up, 15. And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, 16. And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. 17. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 18. And the idols he shall utterly abolish. 19. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. 20. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles, and to the bats: 21. To go into the clefts of

the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. 22. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

The prophet here goes on to shew what desolations would be brought upon their land, when God had forsaken them; which may refer particularly to their destruction by the Chaldeans first, and afterwards by the Romans: Or may have a general respect to the method God takes to awaken and humble proud sinners, and to put them out of conceit with that which they delighted in, and depended on more than God.

We are here told, that sooner or later God will find out a way.

1. To startle and awaken secure sinners that cry peace to themselves, and bid defiance to God and his judgments, (*ver. 10.*) Enter into the rock, i. e. God will attack you with such terrible judgments, and strike you with such terrible apprehensions of them, that you shall be forced to enter into the rock, and hide you in the dust, for fear of the Lord. You shall lose all your courage, and tremble at the shaking of a leaf; your heart shall fail you for fear, (*Luke xx. 26.*) and you shall flee when none pursues. (*Prov. xxxviii. 1.*) To the same purpose, (*ver. 19.*) and you shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, the darkest, the deepest places; they shall call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and rather crush them than not cover them, (*Hof. x. 8.*) It was so particularly at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, (*Luke xviii. 30.*) and of the persecuting pagan powers, (*Rev. vi. 16.*) And al for fear of the Lord, and of the glory of his majesty, looking upon him then to be a consuming fire, and themselves as stubble before him; when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth, to shake the wicked out of it, (*Job xxxvi. 13.*) and to shake all those earthly props and supports which they have buoyed themselves up with, to shake them from under them. Note, 1. With God's terrible majesty, and the glory of it is such as sooner or later will oblige us all to flee before him. 2. Those that will not fear God, and flee to him, will be forced to fear him, and flee from him to a refuge of lies. 3. It is folly for those that are pursued by the wrath of God to think to escape it, and to hide or shelter themselves from it. 4. The things of the earth are things that will be shaken, they are subject to convulsions, and hatching towards a dissolution. 5. The shaking of the earth is and will be a terrible thing to those who set their affections wholly on things of the earth. 6. It will be in vain to think of finding refuge in the caves of the earth, when the earth itself is shaken, there will be no shelter then but in God, and in things above.

2. To humble and abase proud sinners, that look big, and think highly of themselves, and scornfully of all about them, (*ver. 11.*) The lofty looks of man shall be humbled; the eyes that aim high, the countenance in which the pride of the heart shewed itself, these shall be cast down in shame and despair. And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, their spirits shall be broken; and they shall be crest-fallen, and those things which they were proud of they shall be ashamed of. It is repeated again, (*ver. 17.*) The loftiness of man shall be bowed down. Note, Pride will one way or other have a fall. Men's haughtiness will be brought down, either by the grace of God convincing them of the evil of their pride, and clothing them with humility, or by the providence of God, depriving them of all those things which they were proud of, and laying them low. Our Saviour often laid it down for a maxim, that he that exalteth himself shall be abased, he shall either abase himself in true repentance, or God will abase him, and pour contempt upon him. Now here we are told,

(1.) Why this shall be done; because the Lord alone will be exalted. Note, Therefore proud men shall be villified, because the Lord alone will be magnified. It is for the honour of God's power to humble the proud; by this he proves himself to be God, and disproves Job's pretensions to rival with him, (*Job. xl. 11—14.*) Behold every one that is proud, and abase him, then will I also confess unto thee. It is likewise for the honour of his justice; proud men stand in competition with God, who is jealous for his own glory, and will not suffer men either to take that to themselves, or give it to another, which is due to him only; they likewise stand in opposition to God, they resist him, and therefore he resists them; for he will be exalted among the heathen, (*Psal. xlii. 10.*) And there is a day coming in which he alone will be exalted, when he shall have put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, (*1 Cor. xv. 24.*)

(2.) How this shall be done; by humbling judgment, that shall mortify men, and bring them down, (*ver. 12.*) The day of the Lord of hosts, the day of his wrath and judgment shall be upon every one that is proud, and therefore he now laughs at their insolence, because he sees that his day is coming; this day which will be upon them ere they are aware, (*Psal. xxxvii. 13.*) This day of the Lord is here said to be upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up. Jerom observes that the cedars are said to praise God, (*Psal. cxlviii. 9.*) and are trees of the Lord, (*Psal. cii. 16.*) of his planting, (*Isa. xli. 19.*) and yet here God's wrath fastens upon the cedars, which notes (saith he) that some of every rank of men, some great men, will be saved, and some perished. It is brought in as an instance of the strength of God's voice, that it breaks the cedars, (*Psal. xxix. 5.*) and here the day of the Lord is said to be upon the cedars, those of Lebanon, that were the straightest and stateliest; upon the oaks, those of Bashan, that were the strongest and sturdiest; and, (*ver. 14.*) upon the natural elevations and fortresses, and high mountains, and the hills that are lifted up, that over-top the vallies, and seem to push the skies; and, (*ver. 15.*) upon the artificial fastnesses, every high tower, and every fenced wall. Understand these,

(1.) As representing the proud people themselves, that are like the cedars and the oaks, in their own apprehensions firmly rooted, and not to be stirred by any storm, and looking on all round them as shrubs; these are the high mountains and the lofty hills, that seem to fill the earth, that are gazed on by all, and think themselves immovable, but lie most obnoxious to God's thunder-strokes, (*Periplus summorum fulmina montes*: and before the power of God's wrath these mountains are scattered and these hills bow and melt like wax, (*Hab. iii. 6.*) *Psal. lxxviii. 8.* These topping men that are as high towers, in which the noisy bells are hung, on which the thundering murdering cannon are planted, these fenced walls that fortify themselves with their native hardness, and intrench themselves in their fatnesses, they shall be brought down.

(2.) As particularizing the things they are proud of, in which they trust, and of which they make their boasts. The day of the Lord shall be upon those very things which they put their confidence in as their strength and security; he will take from them all their armour wherein they trusted. Did the inhabitants of Lebanon glory in their cedars, and those of Bashan in their oaks, such as no country could shew the like? the day of the Lord should rend those cedars, those oaks, and the houses built of them. Did Jerusalem glory in the mountains that were round about it, as its impregnable fortifications, or in its walls and bulwarks? these should be levelled and laid low in the day of the Lord.

Besides those things that were for their strength and safety, they were proud, (1.) Of their trade abroad, but the day of the Lord shall be upon all the ships of Tarshish, they shall be broken as Jeshophat's were, shall founder at sea, or be shipwrecked in the harbour; Zebulun was a haven of ships, but should now no more rejoice in his going out. When God is bringing ruin upon a people, he can sink all the branches of their revenue. (2.) Of their ornaments at home; but the day of the Lord shall be upon all pleasant pictures, the painting of their ships, so some understand it, or the curious pieces of painting they brought home in their ships from other countries, perhaps from Greece, which afterwards were famous for painters. Upon every thing that is beautiful to behold; so some read it. Perhaps, they were the pictures of their relations, and for that reason pleasant, or of their gods, which to the idolaters were delectable things; or they admired them for the fineness of their colours and strokes. There is no harm in making pictures, or in adorning our rooms with them, provided they transgress not either the second or the seventh commandment. But to place our pictures among our pleasant things, to be fond of them and proud of them, to spend that upon them that should be laid out in charity, and to set our hearts upon them, as it ill becomes those that have so many substantial things to take pleasure in, so it is a provocation to God to strip us of all such vain ornaments.

3. To make idolaters ashamed of their idols, and of all the affection they have had for them, and respect they have paid to them, *ver. 18. The idols he shall utterly abolish.* When the Lord alone shall be exalted, *ver. 17.* he will not only pour contempt upon proud men, that like Pharaoh exalt themselves against him, but much more upon all pretended deities, that are rivals with him for divine honours; they shall be abolished, utterly abolished, their friends shall desert them, their enemies shall destroy them, so that one way or other an utter riddance shall be made of them. See here; (1.) The vanity of false gods, they cannot secure themselves, so far are they from being able to secure their worshippers. (2.) The victory of the true God over them, for great is the truth and will prevail. Dagon fell before the ark, and Baal before the Lord God of Elijah. The gods of the heathen shall be furnished, *Zeph. ii. 11.* and by degrees shall perish, *Jer. x. 11.* The rightful sovereign will triumph over all pretenders.

And as God will abolish idols, so their worshippers shall abandon them, either from a gracious conviction of their vanity and falsehood, as Ephraim when he said, *What have I to do any more with idols?* or from a late and sad experience of their inability to help them, and a woeful despair of relief by them, *ver. 20.* When men are themselves frightened by the judgments of God into the holes of the rocks and caves of the earth, and find that they do thus in vain shift for their own safety, they shall cast their idols which they had made their gods, and hoped to make their friends in the time of need, to the moles and to the bats, any whither out of sight, that being freed from the incumbrance of them they may go into the clefts of the rocks for fear of the Lord, *ver. 21.* Note, 1. Those that will not be reasoned out of their sins, sooner or later shall be frightened out of them. 2. God can make men sick of those idols that they have been most fond of; even the idols of silver, and the idols of gold, the most precious. Covetous men make silver and gold their idols, money their god; but the time may come when they may feel it as much their burden as ever they made it their confidence, and may find themselves as much exposed by it as ever they hoped they should be guarded by it, when it tempts their enemy, sinks their ship, or retards their flight; there was a time when the mariners threw the wares, and even the wheat into the sea, *Jonah i. 3.* Acts xxvii. 31. and the Syrians cast away their garments for haste, *2 Kings vii. 15.* Or men may call it away out of an indignation at themselves for leaning upon such a broken reed. See *Ezek. vii. 19.* The idolaters here throw away their idols, because they are ashamed of them, and of their own folly in trusting to them; or because they are afraid of having them found in their possessions when the judgments of God are abroad; as the thief throws away his stolen goods, when he is searched for or pursued. 3. The darkest holes where the moles and the bats lodge, are the fittest place for idols that have eyes and see not; and God can force men to cast their own idols there, *Isa. xxx. 22.* when they are ashamed of the oaks which they have desired, chap. i. 29. *Mosab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel,* *Jer. xlviii. 13.* 4. It is possible that sin may be both lothed and left, and yet not truly repented of; lothed because forsighted on; left, because no opportunity of committing it; yet not repented of out of any love to God, but only from a slavish fear of his wrath.

4. To make those that have trusted in an arm of flesh ashamed of their confidence, *ver. 22. Cause ye from man.* The providences of God concerning you shall speak this aloud to you, and therefore take warning beforehand, that you may prevent the uneasiness and shame of a disappointment; and consider, (1.) How weak a man is; his breath is in his nostrils, puffed out every moment, soon gone for good and all: man is a dying creature and may die quickly; our nostrils in which our breath is, are of the outward parts of the body; what is there is like one standing at the door, ready to depart: nay, the doors of the nostrils are always open, the breath in them may slip away, ere we are aware, in a moment. Wherein is a man then to be accounted of? Alas, no reckoning is to be made of him, for he is not what he seems to be, what he pretends to be, what we fancy him to be. Man is like to vanity, nay, he is vanity, he is altogether vanity, he is less, he is lighter than vanity, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. (2.) How wise therefore they are that cease from man: it is our duty, it is our interest to do so. Put not your trust in man, nor make even the greatest and mightiest of men your confidence; cease to do so. Let not your eye be to the power of men, for it is finite and limited, derived and depending, it is not from him that your judgment proceeds: let not him be your fear, let not him be your hope; but look up to the power of God, to which all the powers of men are subject and subordinate; dread his wrath, secure his favour, take him for your help, and let your hope be in the Lord your God.

C H A P. III.

The prophet in this chapter goes on to foretel the desolations that were coming upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, both that by the Babylonians, and that which completed their ruin by the Romans; with some of the grounds of God's controversy with them. God threatens, (1.) To deprive them of all the supports, both of their life and of their government, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) To leave them to fall into confusion and disorder, *ver. 4—5—12.* (3.) To deny them the blessing of magistracy, *ver. 6—8.* (4.) To strip the daughters of Zion of their ornaments, *ver. 17—24.* (5.) To lay all waste by the sword of war, *ver. 25, 26.* The sins that provoked God to deal thus with them, were, (1.) Their defiance of God, *ver. 8.* (2.) Their impudence, *ver. 9.* (3.) The abuse of power to oppression and tyranny, *ver. 12—15.* (4.) The pride of the daughters of Zion, *ver. 16.* And in the midst of the chapter the prophet is directed how to apply himself to particular persons, (1.) To assure good people that it should be well with them, notwithstanding those general calamities, *ver. 10.*

(2.) To assure wicked people that however God might in judgment remember mercy, yet it should go ill with them, *ver. 11.* O that the nations of the earth at this day, would hearken to the rebukes and warnings which this chapter gives!

1. **F**OR behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water. 2. The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient. 3. The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. 4. And I will give children to be their princes, and the babes shall rule over them. 5. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable. 6. When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand: 7. In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people. 8. For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

The prophet in the close of the foregoing chapter had given a necessary caution to all, not to put confidence in a man or any creature; and had given a general reason for that caution, taken from the frailty of human life, and the vanity and weakness of human powers; here he gives a particular reason for it, because God was now about to ruin all their creature-confidences, so that they should meet with nothing but disappointment in all their expectations from them. *ver. 1.* The stay and the staff shall be taken away; all their supports, of what kind soever, all the things they trusted to, and looked for help and relief from. Their church and kingdom was now grown old and going to decay, and it was (as old men used to be, *Zech. viii. 4.*) leaning on a staff; now God threatens to take away their staff, and then they must fall of course; to take away the stays both of the city and of the country, of Jerusalem and of Judah, which are indeed stays to one another, and if one fail, the other feels from it.

He that doth this, is the Lord, the Lord of hosts; Adon, the Lord that is himself the stay or foundation; if that stay depart, all other stays certainly break under us, for he is the strength of them all. He that is the Lord, the ruler, that has authority to do it; and the Lord of hosts, that has ability to do it, he shall take away the stay and the staff. St. Jerom refers this to the sensible decay of the Jewish nation, after they had crucified our Saviour, *Rom. xi. 9, 10.* I rather take it as a warning to all nations not to provoke God, for if they make him their enemy, he can and will thus make them miserable. Let us view the particulars:

1. Was their plenty a support to them: It is so to any people, bread is the staff of life; but God can take away the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; and it is just with him to do so, when fulness of bread becomes an iniquity, *Ezek. xvi. 49.* and that which was given to be provision for the life, is made provision for the lusts. He can take away the bread and the water, by withholding the rain, *Deut. xxviii. 23, 24.* Or if he allow them, he can take away the stay of bread and the stay of water, by withholding his blessing, by which many lives, and not by bread only, and which is the staff of bread, *Matt. iv. 4.* and then the bread is not nourishing, the water refreshing, *Hag. i. 6.* Christ is the bread of life and the water of life; if he be our stay, we shall find that a good part not to be taken away, *John vi. 27.* chap. iv. 4.

2. Was their army a support to them? their generals, and commanders, and military men? These shall be taken away; either cut off by the sword, or so discouraged with the defeats they meet with, that they shall throw up their commissions and resolve to act no more: or they shall be disabled by sickness or dispirited, so as to be unfit for business; the mighty man and the man of war, and even the inferior officer, the captain of fifty, shall be removed. It bodes ill with a people when their valour is lost, and their valiant men. Let not the strong man therefore glory in his strength, nor any people trust too much to their mighty men; but let the strong people glorify God, and the city of the terrible nations fear him, who can make them weak and despicable, *Isa. xxv. 3.*

3. Were their ministers of state a support to them? their learned men, their politicians, their clergy, their wits and virtuosos? these also should be taken away; the judges that were skilled in the laws, and expert in administering justice, and the prophets whom they used to consult in difficult cases; the prudent, that were celebrated as men of sense and sagacity above others, and were assistants to the judges; the diviners, so the word is, those that used unlawful arts, who, though rotten stays, yet were stayed on; but it may be asked, as we read it, in a good sense; the ancient, elders in age, in office, the honourable man, the gravity of whose aspect commands reverence, and whose age and experience makes him fit to be a counsellor. Trade is one great support to a nation, even manufactures and handicraft trades; and therefore when the whole stay is to be broken, the cunning artificer too shall be taken; and the last is the eloquent orator, the man skilful of speech, who in some cases may do good service, though he be none of the prudent or the ancient, by putting others' sense in good language; Moses cannot speak well, but Aaron can. God threatens to take these away, *i. e.* (1.) To disable them for the service of their country, making the judges fools, taking away the speech of the trusty, and the understanding of the aged, *J. b. xii. 17, &c.* Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and we cannot be sure that those who have been serviceable to us shall always be so. (2.) To put an end to their days; for princes are therefore not to be trusted in, because their breath goes forth, *Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4.* Note, The removal of useful men by death in the midst of their usefulness, is a very threatening symptom to any people.

4. Was their government a support to them? It ought to be so, it is the business of the sovereign to bear up the pillars of the land, *Psal. lxxv. 3.* But it is here threatened that this stay should fail them; when the mighty men and the prudent are removed, Children shall be their princes; children in age, that must be under tutors and governors; who will be clashing with one another, and making a prey of the young king and his kingdom: children in understanding and disposition, childish men, such as are babes in knowledge, no more fit to rule than a child in the cradle, yet shall rule over them, with all the folly, sickness, and forwardness of a child. And we must see, O Lord, when thy king is such a one, *Eccles. x. 16.*

5. Was

5. Was the union of the subjects among themselves, their good order, and the good understanding and correspondence that they kept with one another, a stay to them? Where this is a people may do the better, though their princes be not such as they should be; but it is here threatened that God would send an evil spirit among them too, (as *Judg. ix. 23.*) which would make them, (1.) Injurious and unneighbourly one towards another, *ver. 5. The people shall be oppressed every one his neighbour*, and their princes, being children, take no care to restrain the oppressors, or relieve the oppressed; nor is it to any purpose to appeal to them; which is a temptation to every man to be his own avenger, and then they bite and devour one another, and will soon be consumed one of another. *Then homo homini lupus; infusque datum fcelari. Nec hospes ab hospite tutus.* (2.) Insolent and disorderly towards their superiors. It is as ill an omen to people as can be, when the rising generation among them is generally untractable, rude and ungovernable, when *the child behaves himself proudly against the ancient*; whereas he should rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, *Lev. xix. 32.* When young people are conceited and pert, and carry it scornfully towards their superiors, it is not only a reproach to government, and weakens the hands that hold them. It is likewise ill with a people when persons of honour cannot support their authority, but are affronted by the base and beggarly; when judges are insulted by the mob, and their powers set at defiance. Those have a great deal to answer for that do this.

6. Is it some stay, some support, to hope that though matters may be now ill managed, yet others may be raised up who may manage better? Yet this expectation also shall be frustrated, for the case shall be so desperate, that no man of sense or substance will meddle with it.

1. The government shall go a-begging, *ver. 6.* Here, (1.) It is taken for granted, that there is no way of redressing all these grievances and bringing things into order again, but by good magistrates, that shall be invested with power by common consent, and shall exert that power for the good of the community. And it is probable this was in many places the true origin of government, men found it necessary to unite in a subjection to one who was thought for such a trust, in order to the welfare and safety of them all; being aware that they must either be ruled or ruined: here therefore is the original contract, *be thou our ruler*, and we will be subject to thee, and *let this ruin be under thy hand*, to be repaired and restored, and then to be preserved and established, and the interests of it advanced, *Isa. lviii. 12.* Take care to protect us by the sword of war, from being injured from abroad, and by the sword of justice, from being injurious to one another, and we will bear faith and true allegiance to thee. 2. The case is represented very deplorable, and things come to a sad pass; for, (1.) Children being their princes, every man will think himself fit to prescribe who shall be a magistrate, and will be for preferring his own relations; whereas, if the princes were as they should be, it would be left entirely to them to nominate the rulers, as it ought to be. (2.) Men will find themselves under a necessity even of forcing power into the hands of those that are thought to be fit for it, a man shall take hold by violence of one to make him a ruler, perceiving him ready to overrun the motion: nay, he shall urge it upon his brother; whereas commonly men are not willing that their equals should be their superiors; witness the envy of Joseph's brethren. (3.) It will be looked upon as ground sufficient for the preferring a man to be a ruler, that he hath clothing better than his neighbours; a very poor qualification to recommend a man to a place of trust in the government; it was a sign the country was much impoverished, when it was a rare thing to find a man that had good clothes, or that could afford to buy himself an alderman's gown or a judge's robes: and that the people were very unthinking, when they had so much respect to a man in gay clothing, with a gold ring, (*Jam. ii. 2, 3.*) that for the sake thereof they would make him their ruler. It had been some sense to have said, thou hast wisdom, integrity, experience, be thou our ruler; but it was a jest to say, *thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler.* A poor wise man, though in vile raiment, *debauched a city*, *Ecc. ix. 15.* We may allude to this, to show how desperate the case of fallen man was when our Lord Jesus was pleased to become our brother, and though he was not courted, offered himself to be our Ruler and Saviour, and to take this ruin under his hand.

2. Those that are thus pressed to come into office, will swear themselves off, because though they are taken to be men of some substance, yet they know themselves unable to bear the charge of the office, and to answer the expectations of those that choose them, *ver. 7.* He shall swear, (shall lift up the hand, the ancient ceremony used in taking an oath,) *I will so be a healer, make not me a ruler.* Note, Rulers must be healers, and good rulers will be so; must study to unite their subjects, and not widen the differences that are among them; those only are fit for government, that are of a meek, quiet, healing spirit: they must also heal the wounds that are given to any of the interests of their people, by suitable applications. But why will he not be a ruler? Because *in my house is neither bread nor a thing.* (1.) If he saith true, it was a sign men's estates were sadly ruined, when even those that made the best appearance really wanted necessities, a common case, and a piteous one; some that having lived fashionably are willing to put the best side outward; yet, if the truth were known, are in great straits, and go with heavy hearts; for want of bread and clothing. (2.) If he do not speak truth, it was a sign men's consciences were sadly debauched, when to avoid the expence of an office, they would load themselves with the guilt of perjury, and (which is the greatest madness in the world) would damn their souls to save their money, *Matth. xvi. 26.* (3.) However it were, it was a sign the case of the nation was very bad, when nobody was willing to accept a place in the government of it, as despairing to have either credit or profit by it, which are the two things aimed at in men's common ambition of preferment.

3. The reason why God brought things to this sad pass, even among his own people; which is given either by the prophet, or by him that refused to be a ruler; it was not for want of good will to his country, but because he saw the case desperate, and past relief, and it would be to no purpose to attempt it, *ver. 8. Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen*, and they may thank themselves they have brought their destruction upon their own heads, for *their tongue and their doings are against the Lord*; in word and action they broke the law of God, and therein designed an affront to him; they wilfully intended to offend him in contempt of his authority, and in defiance of his justice: their tongue was against the Lord, for they contradicted his prophets; and their doings were no better, they acted as they talked; it was an aggravation of their sin that God's eye was upon them, and that his glory was manifested among them: but they provoked him to his face, as if the more they knew of his glory, the greater pride they took in fighting it, and turning it into shame. And this, this is it for which Jerusalem is ruined. Note, The ruin both of persons and people is owing to their sins. If they did not provoke God, he would to do them no hurt, *Jer. xxv. 6.*

9. ¶ The shew of their countenance doth witness against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom, they

hide it not: woe unto their soul, for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. 10. Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. 11. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him. 12. ¶ As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them: O my people, they which lead thee, cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. 13. The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. 14. The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. 15. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the LORD God of hosts.

Here God proceeds in his controversy with his people. Observe.

1. The ground of his controversy; it was for sin that God contended with them; if they vex themselves, let them look a little farther, and they will see that they must thank themselves *woe unto their soul, for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.* Alas for their souls, (so it may be read, in a way of lamentation) for they have procured evil to themselves, *ver. 9.* Note, 1. The condition of sinners is woful and very deplorable. 2. It is the soul that is damaged and endangered by sin. Sinners may prosper in their outward estates, and yet at the same time there may be a woe to their souls. 3. Whatever evil befal sinners, it is of their own procuring, *Jer. ii. 19.*

That which is here charged upon them is.

That the shame that should restrain them from their sins, was quite thrown off, and they were grown impudent, *ver. 9.* This hardens men against repentance, and ripens them for ruin as much as any thing: *the shew of their countenance doth witness against them*: that their minds are in vain, and lewd, and malicious: their eyes speak it plain that they cannot cease from sin, *2 Pet. ii. 14.* One may look them in the face, and guess at the desperate wickedness that there is in their heart, *then declare their sin as Sodom*, so impetuous, so imperious are their lusts, and so impatient of the least check; and so perfectly are all the remaining sparks of virtue extinguished in them. The Sodomites declared their sin, not only by the exceeding greatness of it, *Gen. xiii. 13.* so that it cried to heaven, *Gen. xviii. 20.* but by their shameless owning of that which was most shameful, *Gen. xix. 5.* and thus Judah and Jerusalem did: they are so far from hiding it, that they glory in it, in the bold attempt they have made upon virtue, and the victory they have gained over their own convictions: they have a whore's forehead, *Jer. iii. 3.* and cannot blush, *Jer. vi. 15.* Note, Those that are grown impudent in sin, are ripe for ruin; they that are past shame, (we say) are past grace, and then past hope.

2. That their guides, who should direct them in the right way, put them out of the way, *ver. 12.* They which lead the princes, priests, and prophets, they mislead thee, they cause thee to err; either preaching to them that which was false and corrupt, or if they preached that which was true and good contradicting it by their practices; and the people would sooner follow a bad example, than a good exhortation: thus they *destroyed the way of their paths*, pulling down with one hand what they built up with the other: *Then that call thee blessed, cause thee to err.* So some read it, *quite delectant*: their priests applauded them, as if nothing were amiss among them, cried peace, peace, to them, as if they were in no danger; and thus they caused them to go on in their errors.

3. That their judges, who should have patronized and protected the oppressed, were themselves the greatest oppressors, *ver. 13, 15.* The elders of the people, and the princes, that had learning and could not but know better things, that had great estates, and were not under the temptation of necessity to encroach upon those about them, and that were men of honour, and should scorn to do a base thing, yet *then have eaten up the vineyard*: God's vineyard, which they were appointed to be the dressers and keepers of, they burnt it, to the word ignities; they did as ill by it as its worst enemies could do, *Psal. lxxx. 16.* Or the vineyards of the poor, they wrested them out of their possession, as Jezebel did Naboth's; or devoured the fruits of them, fed their lusts with that which should have been the necessary food of indigent families, the spoil of the poor was hoarded up in their houses: when God came to search for stolen goods there he found it, and it was a witness against them. It was to be had, and they might have made restitution, but would not. God reasons with these great men, *ver. 15. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces?* What canst have you for it? What good doth it do you? Or what hurt have they done you? Do you think you had power given you for such a purpose as this? Note, There is nothing more accountable, and yet nothing which must more certainly be accounted for, than the injuries and abuses that are done to God's people by their persecutors and oppressors; *ye grind the faces of the poor*; put them to as much pain and terror, as if they were ground in a mill, and as certainly reduce them to dust by one act of oppression after another: or their faces are bruised and crushed with the blows you have given them; you have not only ruined their estates, but given them personal abuses: Our Lord Jesus was *smitten on the face*, *Matth. xxvi. 67.*

2. The management of this controversy: (1.) God himself is the prosecutor, *ver. 13.* The Lord stands up to plead, or he sets himself to debate the matter, and he stands to judge the people; to judge for those that were oppressed and abused, and he will enter into judgment with the princes, *ver. 14.* Note, The greatest of men cannot exempt or secure themselves from the scrutiny and sentence of God's judgment, nor demur to the jurisdiction of the court of heaven. (2.) The indictment is proved by the notorious evidence of the fact; look upon the oppressors, and the *shew of their countenance witnesseth against them*, *ver. 9.* look upon the oppressed, and you see how their faces are battered and abused, *ver. 15.* (3.) The controversy is already begun in the change of the ministry, to punish those that had abused their power to ill purposes; God sets those over them that had not sense to use it to any good purposes; *children are their oppressors, and women rule over them*, *ver. 12.* Men that have weak judgments and strong passions, as women and children: this was their sin, that their rulers were such, and it became a judgment upon them.

3. The distinction that shall be made between particular persons in the prosecution of this controversy, *ver. 10, 11.* Say to the righteous, it shall be well with him: Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him. He had said, *ver. 9.* they have rewarded evil to themselves; and to make that out, he here shews that God will render to every man according to his works: Had they been righteous, it had been well with them: but if it be ill with them, it is because they are wicked and will be so. Thus God stated the matter to Cain, to convince him that he had no reason to be angry, *Gen. iv. 7.* Or it may be taken thus: God's threatening national judgments, which

which should ruin the public interest: Now, (1.) Some good people might fear that they should be involved in that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets comfort them against those fears: Whatever comes of the unrighteous nation, *say ye to the righteous man*, that he shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners, the *Judge of all the earth will not slay the righteous with the wicked*, Gen. xviii. 25. no, assure him in God's name, that *it shall be well with him*; the property of the trouble shall be altered to him, and he shall be *hid in the day of the Lord's anger*: He shall have divine supports and comforts, which shall abound as afflictions abound, and so it shall be well with him. When the whole *pan of bread is taken away*, yet in the day of *famine they shall be satisfied*, they shall eat the fruit of their doings; i. e. they shall have the testimony of their consciences for them, that they kept themselves pure from the common iniquity, and therefore the common calamity is not the same thing to them that it is to others; they brought no *fuel to the flame*, and therefore are not themselves fuel for it. (2.) Some wicked people might hope that they should escape that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets shake their vain hopes; *Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him*, ver. 11. to him the judgments shall have a sting, and there shall be *wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery*. There is a woe to wicked people, and though they may think to shelter themselves from public judgment, yet it shall be ill with them; it will grow worse and worse with them if they repent not, and the worst of all will be at last; for the *reward of his hands shall be done to him*, in the day when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body.

16. ¶ Moreover, the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched-forth necks, and wanton eyes, walking, and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: 17. Therefore the LORD will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. 18. In that day the LORD will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round fires like the moon, 19. The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, 20. The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the head-band, and the tablets, and the ear-rings, 21. The rings, and nose-jewels, 22. The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping-pins, 23. The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. 24. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle, a rent; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. 25. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. 26. And her gates shall lament and mourn, and she being desolate, shall sit upon the ground.

The prophet's business was to shew all sorts of people what they had contributed to the national guilt, and what share they must expect in the national judgments that were coming; here he reproves and warns the daughters of Zion, tells the ladies of their faults, and Moses in the law having denounced God's wrath against the tender and delicate woman, (the prophets being a comment upon the law) *Deut. xxviii. 30.* here he tells them how they should smart by the calamities that were coming upon them. Observe,

1. The sin charged upon the daughters of Zion, ver. 16. The prophet expressly voucheth God's authority for what he said, lest it should be thought it was unbecoming him to take notice of such things, and should be ill resented by the ladies: *The Lord saith it*. Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, let them know that God takes notice of, and is much displeased with the folly and vanity of proud women, and his law takes cognizance even of their dress. Two things they here stand indicted for, haughtiness and wantonness; directly contrary to that *modesty, shamefastness, and sobriety, with which women ought to adorn themselves*, 1 Tim. ii. 9. They discovered the disposition of their mind by their gait and gesture, and the lightness of their carriage. They are haughty, for they *walk with stretched-forth necks*, that they may seem tall, or as thinking nobody good enough to speak to them, or to receive a look or a smile from them; their eyes are wanton, deceiving, so the word is; with their amorous glances they draw men into their snares, they affect a formal starched way of going, that people may look at them and admire them, and know that they have been at the dancing school, and had learned the minuet step; they go *mincing*, or nicely tripping, not willing to set so much as the sole of their foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy; they make a *tinkling with their feet*, having, as some think, chains or little bells upon their shoes that made a noise: They go *as if they were fettered*, so some read it, like a horse trammelled, that he may learn to pace: Thus Agag came delicately, 1 Sam. xv. 32. Such a nice affected mien is not only a force upon that which is natural, and ridiculous before men, men of sense; but as it is an evidence of a vain mind, it is offensive to God. And two things aggravated it here, (1.) That these were the daughters of Zion, the holy mountain, who should have carried themselves with the gravity that becomes women professing godliness. (2.) That it should seem by the connection they were the wives and daughters of the princes who spoiled and oppressed the poor, (ver. 14. 15.) that they might maintain this pride and luxury of their families.

2. The punishments threatened for this sin, and they answer the sin, as face answers to face in a glass, ver. 17, 18.

1. They *walked with stretched-forth necks*, but God will *smite with a scab the crown of their head*, which shall lower their crests and make them ashamed to shew their heads, being obliged by it to cut off their hair. Note, Loathsome diseases are often sent as the just punishment of pride, and are sometimes the immediate effect of lewdness, the flesh and the body being consumed by it.

2. They *cared not what they laid out in furnishing themselves with great variety of fine clothes*; but God will reduce them to such poverty and distress, that they should not have clothes sufficient to cover their nakedness, but their uncomeliness should be exposed through their rags.

3. They were extremely fond and proud of their ornaments; but God will strip them of those ornaments, when their houses should be plundered,

their treasures rifled, and they themselves led into captivity. The prophet here instanceth in many of the ornaments which they used, as particularly as if he had been the keeper of their wardrobe, or had attended them in their dressing-room. It is not at all material to enquire what sort of ornaments each of these were, and whether the translations rightly express the original words; perhaps a hundred years hence the names of some of the ornaments that are now in use in our own land, will be as little understood, as some of those here are: Fashions alter, and so do the names of them; and yet the mention of them is not in vain, but is designed to expose the folly of the daughters of Zion: For, (1.) Many of these things, we may suppose, were very odd and ridiculous, and if they had not been in fashion, would have been hooted at: They were fitter to be toys for children to play with, than ornaments for grown people to go to mount Zion in. (2.) These things that were decent and convenient, as the linen, the hoods, and the veils, yet needed not to be provided in such abundance and variety as they had. It is necessary to have apparel, and that each should have it according to their rank, but what occasion was there for so many changeable suits of apparel? ver. 22. that they might not be seen two days together in the same suit: "They must have (as the homily against excess of apparel speaks) one gown for the day, another for the night; one long, another short; one for the working-day, another for the holy-day; one of this colour, another of that colour; one of cloth, another of silk or damask; one dress afore dinner, another after; one of the Spanish fashion; another Turkey, and never content with sufficient." Which as it is an evidence of pride and vain curiosity, so must needs spend a great deal in gratifying a base lust which ought to be laid out in works of piety and charity: And it is well if poor tenants be not racked, or poor creditors defrauded to support it. (3.) The enumeration of these things intimates what care they were in about them, how much their hearts were upon them, what an exact account they kept of them, how nice and critical they were about them, how insatiable their desire was of them, and how much of their comfort was bound up in them. A maid could forget none of these ornaments, though they were never so many, *Jer. ii. 31.* but would report them as readily, and talk of them with as much pleasure, as if they had been things of the greatest moment. The prophet doth not speak of these things as in themselves sinful; they may lawfully be had and used, but as things which they were proud of, and should therefore be deprived of.

4. They were very nice and curious about their clothes; but God would make those bodies of their's a reproach and burden to them, which they were at such expence to beautify and make easy, ver. 24. *Instead of sweet smell*, (those tablets, or boxes of perfume, houses of the soul or breath, as they are called, ver. 20. margin) *there shall be stink*, garments grown nasty, with being long worn, or from some loathsome disease, or plaisters for the cure of it; instead of a rich embroidered girdle, used to make the clothes sit tight, there shall be a rent, a rending of the clothes for grief, or old rotten clothes rent into rags: instead of well-set hair, curiously plaited and powdered, there shall be baldness, the hair being plucked off or shaven, as was usual in times of great affliction, *chap. xv. 2. Jer. xvi. 6.* or in great servitude, *Ezek. xxix. 18.* Instead of a stomacher, or a scarf, or sash, a *girding of sackcloth*, in token of deep humiliation: And burning instead of beauty; i. e. Those that had a good complexion, and were proud of it, when they are carried into captivity, shall be tamed and sun-burnt; and it is observed, that the best faces are soonest injured by the weather. From all this let us learn, (1.) Not to be nice and curious about our apparel, nor to affect that which is gay and costly, or be proud of it. (2.) Not to be secure in the enjoyment of any of the delights of sense, because we know not how soon we may be stripped of them, nor what straits we may be reduced to.

5. They designed by these ornaments to charm the gentlemen and win by them, ver. 25. *Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war*: The fire shall consume them, and then the maidens shall not be given in marriage, as it is, *Psal. lxxviii. 63.* when the sword comes with commission the mighty commonly fall first by it, because they are most forward to venture: And when Zion's guards are cut off, no marvel that Zion's gates lament and mourn, ver. 26. the enemies having made themselves masters of them, and the city itself being desolate, being empty or swept, shall sit upon the ground like a disconsolate widow. If sin be harboured within the walls, lamentation and mourning are near the gates.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter we have, 1. A threatening of the paucity and scarceness of men, ver. 1. which might fitly enough have been added to the chief of the foregoing chapter, to which it hath a plain reference. 2. A promise of the restoration of Jerusalem's peace and purity, righteousness and safety, in the day of the Messiah, ver. 2-6. Thus in wrath mercy is remembered, and gospel-grace is a sovereign relief in reference to the terrors of the law, and the desolations made by sin.

1. AND in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

It was threatened, *chap. iii. 25.* that the mighty men should fall by the sword in war; and it was threatened as a punishment to the women that affected gaiety, and a loose sort of conversation: Now here we have the effect and consequence of that great slaughter of men;

1. That though providence has so wisely ordered that, *communibus annis*, there is pretty near an equal number of males and females born into the world; yet through the devastations made by war, there should scarce be one man in seven left alive. As there are deaths attending the bringing forth of children, which are peculiar to the woman, that was first in the transgression; so to balance that, there are deaths peculiar to men: those by the sword in the high places of the field, which perhaps devour more than child-bed doth. Here it is foretold, that such multitudes of men should be cut off that there should be seven women to one man.

2. That by reason of the scarcity of men, though marriage should be kept up, for the raising of recruits, and the preserving of the race of mankind upon earth, yet the usual method of it should be quite altered. That whereas men ordinarily make their court to the women, now the woman should take hold of the men, foolishly fearing (as Lot's daughters did when they saw the ruin of Sodom, and perhaps though it reached farther than it did) that in a little time there would be none left, *Gen. xix. 31.* And that whereas women naturally hate to come in sharers with others, now seven should by consent become the wives of one man: And whereas by the law the husband was obliged to provide food and raiment for his wife, *Erod. xxi. 10.* which with many would be the most powerful argument against multiplying

multiplying wives; these women will be bound to find themselves, they will eat bread of their own earning, and wear apparel of their own working; and the man they court shall be at no expence upon them, only they desire to be called his wives, to take away the reproach of a single life. They are willing to be wives upon any terms, though never for-reasonable; and perhaps the rather, because on these troublesome times it would be a kindness to them to have a husband for their protector: But St. Paul, on the contrary, in the time of distress, thanks the single state preferable. 1 Cor. vii. 26. I wish this do not come in here partly as a reflection upon the daughters of Zion, that notwithstanding the humbling providences they were under, chap. iii. 18. they remained unhumiliated; and, instead of repenting of their pride and vanity when God was contending with them for it, all their care was to get them husbands: That modesty which is the greatest beauty of the fair sex, is forgotten, and with them the reproach of vice is nothing to the reproach of virginity: A sad symptom of the irrecoverable desolations of virtue.

2. In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. 3. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: 4. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. 5. And the LORD will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence. 6. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

By the foregoing threatenings, Jerusalem is brought into a very deplorable condition, every thing looks melancholy: But here the sun breaks out from behind the cloud; many exceeding great and precious promises we have in these verses, giving assurance of comfort, which may be discerned through the troubles, and of happy days which shall come after them. And these certainly point at the kingdom of the Messiah, and the great redemption to be wrought out by him under the figure and type of the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem, by the reforming reign of Hezekiah after Ahaz, and the return out of their captivity in Babylon; to both which it may have some reference, but chiefly to Christ.

It is here promised as the issue of all these troubles,

1. That God will raise up a righteous branch, which should produce fruits of righteousness, ver. 2. In that day, that same day, at that very time, when Jerusalem shall be destroyed, and the Jewish nation extirpated and dispersed, the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, and then shall be the reviving of the church, when every body feared the utter ruin of it.

(1.) Christ himself shall be exalted; He is the branch of the Lord, the man, the branch; it is one of his prophetic names, my servant, the branch, Zech. iii. 18.—vi. 12. the branch of righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 5.—xxxiii. 15. a branch out of the stem of Jesse, Isa. xi. 1. and that, as some think, is alluded to when he is called a Nazarene, Matt. ii. 23. Here he is called the branch of the Lord, because planted by his power, and flourishing to his praise. The ancient Chaldees paraphrase here reads it, *The Christ, or Messiah of the Lord*: He shall be the beauty, and glory, and joy. (1.) He shall himself be advanced to the joy set before him, and the glory which he had with the father before the world was. He that was a reproach of men, and whose visage was marred more than any man's, is now in the upper world beautiful and glorious, as the son in his strength, admired and adored by angels. (2.) He shall be beautiful and glorious in the esteem of all believers, shall gain an interest in the world, and a name among men above every name. To them that believe he is precious, he is an honour, 1 Pet. ii. 7. the fairest of ten thousand, Cant. v. 10. and altogether glorious. Let us rejoice that he is so, and let him be so to us.

(2.) His gospel shall be embraced; That is the fruit of the branch of the Lord, all the graces and comforts of the gospel spring from Christ; but it is called the fruit of the earth, because it spring up in this world, and was calculated for the present state; And Christ compares himself to a corn of wheat, that falls into the ground, and dies, and so brings forth much fruit, John xii. 24. The success of the gospel is represented by the earth's yielding her increase, Psalm lxxvii. 6. and the planting of the Christian church is God's sowing it to himself in the earth, Hos. ii. 23. We may understand it of both the persons and the things that are the products of the gospel; they shall be excellent and comely, shall appear very agreeable, and be very acceptable to them that are escaped of Israel, to that remnant of the Jews which were saved from perishing with the rest in unbelief, Rom. xi. 4. Note, If Christ be precious to us, his gospel will be so, and all its truths and promises; his church will be so, and all that belong to it. These are the good fruit of the earth, in comparison with which all other things are but weeds. It will be a good evidence to us, that we are of the chosen remnant, distinguished from the rest that are called Israel and marked for salvation, if we are brought to see a transcendent beauty in Christ, and holiness, and the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. As a type of this blessed day, Jerusalem, after Sennacherib's invasion, and after the captivity in Babylon, should again flourish as a branch, and be blessed with the fruits of the earth: Compare, chap. xxxvii. 31, 32. *The remnant shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.* And if by the fruit of the earth here we understand the good things of this life, we may observe, that those have peculiar sweetness in them to the chosen remnant, who having a covenant right to them have the most comfortable use of them: If the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious in our eyes, even the fruit of the earth also will be excellent and comely, because then we may take it as the fruit of the promise, Psalm xxxvii. 16, 1 Tim. iv. 8.

2. That God will reserve to himself a holy seed, ver. 3. when the generality of those that have a place and a name in Zion, and in Jerusalem, shall be cut off as withered branches by their own unbelief, yet some shall be left. Some shall remain, some shall still cleave to the church, when its property is altered, and it is become Christian; for God will not quite cast off his people, Rom. xi. 1. There is here and there one that is left; now, (1.) This is a remnant according to the election of grace, as the apostle speaks, Rom. xi. 5. such as are written among the living, marked in the counsel and fore-knowledge of God for life and salvation; written to life, so the

word is, designed and determined for it unalterably, for what I have written, I have written. Those that are kept alive in killing, dying times, were written for life in the book of divine providence: and shall we not suppose those who are rescued from a greater death, to be such as were written in the Lamb's book of life? Rev. xiii. 8. as many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed to the salvation of the soul, Acts xiii. 48. Note, All that were written among the living, shall be found among the living, every one; for of all that were given to Christ, he shall lose none. (2.) It is a remnant under the dominion of grace; for every one that is written among the living, and is accordingly left, shall be called holy; i. e. shall be holy, and shall and accepted of God accordingly. Those only that are holy shall be left, when the son of man shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends: and all that are chosen to salvation, are chosen to sanctification. See 2 Thess. ii. 13. Eph. i. 1.

3. That God will reform his church, and will rectify and amend whatever is amiss in it, ver. 4. Then the remnant shall be called holy, when the Lord shall have washed away their filth, washed it from among them by cutting off the wicked persons, washed it from within them by purging out the wicked thing. They shall not be called so, till they are in some measure made so. Gospel-times are times of reformation, Heb. ix. 10. typified by the reformation in the days of Hezekiah, and that after the captivity, to which this promise refers. Observe, (1.) The places and persons to be reformed, Jerusalem; which though the holy city, yet needed reformation; and being the royal city, the reformation of that would have a good influence upon the whole kingdom. The daughters of Zion also must be reformed, the women in a particular manner, whom he had reproved, chap. iii. 16. When they were decked in their ornaments, they thought themselves wonderful clean; but being proud of them, the prophet calls them their filth, for no sin is more abominable to God than pride: or by the daughters of Zion may be meant the country towns, and villages, which were related to Jerusalem, as the mother city, and which needed reformation. (2.) The reformation itself; the filth shall be washed away, for wickedness is filthiness, particularly blood-guiltiness, for which Jerusalem was infamous, 2 Kings xxi. 16. and which defiles the land more than any other sin. Note, The reformation of a city is the cleansing of it; when vicious customs and fashions are reformed, and the open practice of wickedness is restrained, the place is made clean and sweet, which before was a dunghill: and this is not only for its credit and reputation among strangers, but for the comfort and health of the inhabitants themselves. (3.) The author of the reformation; *The Lord shall do it*: reformation-work is God's work: if any thing be done to purpose in it, it is his doing. But how? by the judgment of his providence, the sinners were destroyed and consumed; but it is by the Spirit of his grace, that they are reformed and converted. This is work that is done not by might, or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zech. iv. 6. working both upon the sinners themselves that are to be reformed, and upon magistrates, ministers, and others that are to be employed as instruments of reformation. The Spirit herein acts, (1.) As a Spirit of judgment, enlightening the mind, convincing the conscience; as a Spirit of wisdom guiding us to deal prudently, Isa. lii. 13. as a discerning, distinguishing Spirit, separating between the precious and the vile. (2.) As a Spirit of burning, quickening and invigorating the affections, and making men zealously affected in a good work. The Spirit works as fire, Matt. iii. 10. An ardent love to Christ and souls, and a flaming zeal against sin, will carry men on with resolution in their endeavours to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. See Isa. xxxii. 15, 16.

4. That God will protect his church, and all that belong to it, ver. 5, 6. when they are purified and reformed, they shall no longer lie exposed: but God will take a particular care of them; they that are sanctified, are well fortified; for God will be to them a guide and a guard.

1. Their tabernacles shall be defended, ver. 5. (1.) Their dwelling-places; the tabernacles of their rest, their own houses, where they worship God, alone, and with their families: That blessing which is upon the habitation of the just, shall be a protection to it, Prov. iii. 33. In the tabernacles of the righteous, shall the voice of rejoicing and salvation be, Psal. cxviii. 15. Note, God takes particular cognizance and care of the dwelling-places of his people, of every one of them, the poorest cottage as well as the stateliest palace. When inquiry is put for from the tabernacle, the Almighty shall be its defence, Job. xxii. 23—25. (2.) Their assemblies or tabernacles of meeting for religious worship; no mention is made of the temple, for the promise points at a time when not one stone of that shall be left upon another: but all the congregations of Christians, though but two or three met together in Christ's name, shall be taken under the special protection of Heaven; they shall no more be scattered, no more disturbed, nor shall any weapon formed against them prosper. Note, we ought to reckon it a great mercy if we have liberty to worship God in public, free from the alarms of the sword of war, or persecution.

Now this writ of protection is drawn up, (1.) In a similitude taken from the safety of the camp of Israel, when they marched through the wilderness. God will give to the Christian church as real proofs, though not so sensible, of his care of them, as he gave to them then. The Lord will again create a cloud and smoke by day, to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, to enlighten and warm the air, which in the night is cold and dark. See Exod. xiii. 21. Neh. ix. 10. This pillar of cloud and fire interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptians, Exod. xiv. 20. Note, Though miracles are ceased, yet God is the same to the New Testament church that he was to Israel of old; the very same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. (2.) In a similitude taken from the outside cover of rams' skins and badgers' skins, that was upon the curtains of the tabernacle, as every dwelling-place of mount Zion and every assembly were as dear to God as that tabernacle was; upon all the glory shall be a defence, to save it from wind and weather. Note, the church on earth has its glory: gospel-truths and ordinances, the scriptures and the ministry, are the church's glory; and upon all this glory there is a defence, and ever shall be, for the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. If God himself be the glory in the midst of it, he will himself be a wall of fire round about it, impenetrable, and impregnable. Grace in the soul is the glory of it, and those that have it are kept by the power of God, as in a strong hold, 1 Pet. i. 5.

2. Their tabernacles shall be a defence to them, ver. 6. God's tabernacle was a pavilion to the saints, Psalm xxvii. 5. But when that is taken down, they shall not want a covert: the divine power and goodness shall be a tabernacle to all the saints. God himself will be their hiding-place, Psalm xxxii. 7. they shall be at home in him, Psalm xci. 9. He will himself be to them as the shadow of a great rock, Isa. xxxii. 2. and his name a strong tower, Prov. xviii. 10. He will be not only a shadow from the heat in the day-time, but a covert from storm and rain. Note, In this world we must expect change of weather, and all the inconveniences that attend it; we shall meet with storm and rain in this lower region, and at other times the heat of the day no less burdensome: but God is a refuge to his people all weathers.

C H A P. V.

In this chapter, the prophet in God's name, shews the people of God their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins, and the judgments which were likely to be brought upon them for their sins: 1. By a parable, under the similitude of an unfruitful vineyard, representing the great favours God had bestowed upon them, their disappointing of his expectations from them, and the ruin they had thereby deserved, ver. 1—7. 2. By an enumeration of the sins that did abound among them, with a threatening of punishments that should answer the sins: (1.) Covetousness, and greediness of worldly wealth, which shall be punished with famine, ver. 8—10. (2.) Rioting, and revelling, and drunkenness, ver. 11, 12—22. which shall be punished with captivity and all the miseries that attend it, ver. 13—17. (3.) Presumption in sin, and defying the justice of God, ver. 18, 19. (4.) Confounding the distinctions between virtue and vice, and so undermining the principles of religion, ver. 20. (5.) Self-conceit, ver. 21. (6.) Perverting justice; for which, and the other instances of reigning wickedness among them, a great and general desolation is threatened, which should lay all waste, ver. 24, 25. and which should be effected by a foreign invasion, ver. 26—30. referring perhaps to the havoc made not long after by Sennacherib's army.

1. **N**OW will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: 2. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. 3. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? 5. And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: 6. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

See what variety of methods the great God takes to awaken sinners to repentance, by convincing them of sin, and shewing them their misery and danger by reason of it: to this purpose he speaks sometimes in plain terms, and sometimes in parables; sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse, as here: we have tried to reason with you, chap. i. 18. now let us put your case into a poem, inscribed to the honour of my well-beloved. God the Father dictates it to the honour of Christ his well-beloved Son, whom he hath constituted Lord of the vineyard: the prophet sings it to the honour of Christ too, for he is his well-beloved. The Old Testament prophets were friends of the bridegroom; Christ is God's beloved son, and our beloved Saviour; whatever is said or sung of the church, must be intended to his praise, even that which (like this) tends to our shame. This parable is put into a song, that it might be the more moving and affecting, might be the more easily learned, and exactly remembered, and the better transmitted to posterity: and it is an exposition of the song of Moses, *Deut. xxxii.* shewing, that what he then foretold was now fulfilled. Jerom saith, Christ, the well-beloved, did in effect sing this mournful song when he beheld Jerusalem, and wept over it, *Luke xix. 41.* and had reference to it in the parable of the vineyard, *Mat. xxi. 33.* only here the fault was in the vines, there in the husbandmen.

Here is, 1. The great things which God had done for the Jewish church and nation; when all the rest of the world lay in common, not cultivated by divine revelation, that was his vineyard, they were his peculiar people: he owned them for his own, set them apart for himself; the soil they were planted in was extraordinary; it was a very fruitful hill, the horn of the son of oil: so it is in the margin. There was plenty, a cornucopia, and there was dainty; they did there eat the fat and drink the sweet; and so were furnished with abundance of good things to honour God with in sacrifices and free-will offerings. The advantages of our situation will be brought into the account another day. Observe further, what God did for this vineyard: (1.) He fenced it; took it under his special protection, kept it night and day under his own eye, lest any should hurt it, *Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.* If they had not themselves thrown down their fence, no inward could have been made upon them, *Psal. cxxv. 2—cxxx. 4.* (2.) He gathered the stones out of it, that as nothing from without might damage it, so nothing within might obstruct its fruitfulness. He proffered his grace to take away the stony heart. (3.) He planted it with the choicest vine, set up a pure religion among them, gave them a most excellent law, instituted ordinances very proper for the keeping up of their acquaintance with God, *Jer. ii. 21.* (4.) He built a tower in the midst of it, either for defence against violence, or for the dressers of the vineyard to lodge in; or rather, for the owner of the vineyard to sit in, to take a view of the vines, *Cant. vii. 12.* a summer house: the temple was this tower, about which the priests lodged, and where God promised to meet his people, and gave them the tokens of his presence among them, and pleasures in them. (5.) He made a wine-press therein, set up his altar, to which the sacrifices, as the fruits of the vineyard, should be brought.

2. The disappointment of his just expectations from them; he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and a great deal of reason he had for that expectation. Note, God expects vineyard fruit from those that enjoy vineyard privileges; not only leaves, as *Mark xi. 30.* a bare profession, though never to green, will not serve; not only buds and blossoms, good purposes and good beginnings are good things, but not enough, there must be fruit; a good heart, and a good life; vineyard fruit; thoughts and affections, words and actions agreeable to the Spirit, which is the fatness of the vineyard,

Gal. v. 22, 23. answerable to the ordinances, which are the dressings of the vineyard; and acceptable to God, the Lord of the vineyard, and fruit according to the season. Such fruits as this God expects from us, grapes, the fruit of the vine, with which they honour God and man, *Judg. ix. 13.* and his expectations are neither high nor hard, but righteous and very reasonable. Yet see how his expectations are frustrated, it brought forth wild grapes; not only no fruit at all, but naughty fruit, worse than none; grapes of Sodom, *Deut. xxxii. 33.* (1.) Wild grapes are the fruits of the corrupt nature; fruit according to the crab-stock, not according to the engrafted vine; from the root of bitterness, *Heb. xii. 15.* where grace doth not work, corruption will. (2.) Wild grapes are hypocritical performances in religion, that look like grapes, but are sour or bitter; and are so far from being pleasing to God, that they are provoking, as their's, *Isa. i. 11.* counterfeit graces are wild grapes.

9. An appeal to themselves, whether upon the whole matter God must not be justified and they condemned, ver. 3, 4. And now the case is plainly stated, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard: This implies that God was blamed about them; there was a controversy between them and him: but the equity was so plain on his side, that he could venture to put the decision of the controversy to their own consciences, let any inhabitant of Jerusalem, any man of Judah, that hath but the use of his reason, and a common sense of equity and justice, speak his mind impartially in this matter. Here is a challenge to any man to shew,

(1.) Any instance wherein God had been wanting to them: *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?* he speaks of the external means of fruitfulness, and such as might be expected from the dresser of a vineyard, from whom it is not required that he should change the nature of the vine, *What ought to have been done more?* so it may be read; they had every thing requisite for instruction and direction in their duty, for the quickening of them to it, and putting them in mind of it; no inducements were wanting to persuade them to it, but all arguments were used, proper to work either upon hope or fear; and they had all the opportunities they could desire for the performance of their duty, the new moons, and the sabbaths, and solemn feasts; they had the scriptures, the lively oracles, a standing ministry in the priests and Levites, besides what was extraordinary in the prophets. No nations had statutes and judgments so righteous.

(2.) Nor could any tolerable excuse be offered for their walking thus contrary to God; wherefore, what reason can be given why it should bring forth wild grapes, when I looked for grapes? Note, The wickedness of those that profess religion and enjoy the means of grace, is the most unreasonable, unaccountable thing in the world; and the whole blame of it must lie upon the sinners themselves; if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it, and shalt not have a word to say for thyself in the judgment of the great day. God will prove his own ways equal, and the sinners' ways unequal.

4. Their doom read, and a righteous sentence passed upon them for their ill carriage towards God, ver. 5, 6. And now go to, since nothing can be offered in excuse of the crime or arrest of the judgment, I will tell you what I am now determined to do to my vineyard; I will be vexed and troubled with it no more, since it will be good for nothing, it shall be good for nothing; in short, it shall cease to be a vineyard, and be turned into a wilderness; the church of the Jews shall be unchurched, their charter shall be taken away, and they shall become *lo-ammi, not my people.* (1.) They shall no longer be distinguished as a peculiar people, but be laid in common; *I will take the hedge thereof,* and then it will soon be eaten up, and become as bare as other grounds; they mingled themselves with the nations, and therefore were justly scattered among them. (2.) They shall no longer be protected as God's people, but left exposed; God will not only suffer the wall to go to decay, but he will break it down, will remove all their defences from them; and then they become an easy prey to their enemies, who had long waited for an opportunity to do them a mischief, and will now tread them down and trample upon them. (3.) They shall no longer have the face of a vineyard, the form and shape of a church and commonwealth; but shall be levelled and laid waste. This was fulfilled when Jerusalem for their sakes was ploughed as a field, *Micah iii. 12.* (4.) No more pains shall be taken with them by magistrates or ministers, the dressers and keepers of their vineyard: it shall not be pruned or digged, but every thing shall run wild, and nothing shall come up but briars and thorns, the products of sin and the curse, *Gen. iii. 18.* When errors and corruptions, vice and immorality go without check or controul, no testimony borne against them, no rebuke given them, or restraint put upon them, the vineyard is unpruned, is not dressed or ridged: and then it will soon be like the vineyard of the man void of understanding, all grown over with thorns. (5.) That which completes its woe is, that the dew of heaven shall be withheld: he that hath the key of the clouds will command them that they rain no rain upon it: and that alone is sufficient to turn it into a desert. Note, God in a way of righteous judgment denies his grace to those that have long received it in vain. The sum of all is, they that would not bring forth good food should bring forth none. The curse of barrenness, is the punishment of the sin of barrenness, as *Mark xi. 14.* This had its accomplishment in part in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, its full accomplishment in the final rejection of the Jews; and has its frequent accomplishment in the departure of God's Spirit from those persons that have long resisted him and striven against him: and the removal of his gospel from those places that have been long a reproach to it, while it hath been an honour to them. It is no loss to God to lay his vineyard waste, for he can when he pleaseth turn a wilderness into a fruitful field: and when he doth thus dismantle a vineyard, it is but as he did by the garden of Eden, which when man had by sin forfeited his place in, it was soon levelled with common soil.

5. The reddition of this parable, or a key to it, ver. 7. where we are told: 1. What is meant by the vineyard, it is the house of Israel, and body of the people, incorporated in one church and commonwealth; and what by the vines, the pleasant plants, the plants of God's pleasure, which he had been pleased in, and delighted in doing good to, they are the men of Judah: these he had dealt graciously with, and from them he expected suitable returns. 2. What is meant by the grapes that were expected, and the wild grapes that were produced; he looked for judgment and righteousness, that the people should be honest in all their dealings, and the magistrates should strictly administer justice: this might reasonably be expected among a people that had such excellent laws and rules of justice given them, *Deut. iv. 8.* But it was quite otherwise, instead of judgment there was the cruelty of the oppressors, and instead of righteousness the cry of the oppressed; every thing was carried by clamour and noise, and not by equity and according to the merits of the cause. It is sad with a people when wickedness hath usurped the place of judgment, *Eccles. iii. 16.* Very sad with a soul, when instead of the grapes of humility, meekness, patience, love, and contempt of the world, which God looks for, there are the wild grapes of pride, passion, discontent, malice, and contempt of God: instead of the grapes of praying and praising, the wild grapes of cursing and swearing, which are a great offence to God. Some of the ancients apply this to the Jews in Christ's time, among whom

God looked for righteousness, *i. e.* that they should have received and embraced Christ, but behold a cry, that cry, *crucify him, crucify him.*

8. ¶ Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! 9. In mine ears said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair without inhabitant. 10. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah. 11. ¶ Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them! 12. And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands. 13. ¶ Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. 14. Therefore hell hath enlarged itself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. 15. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: 16. But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy, shall be sanctified in righteousness. 17. Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

The world and the flesh are the two great enemies that we are in danger of being overpowered by, and yet in no danger if we do not ourselves yield to them; eagerness of the world, and indulgence of the flesh, are the two sins against which the prophet in God's name here denounceth woes; sins which then abounded among the men of Judah, and were some of the wild grapes they brought forth, *ver.* 4. and for which God threatens to bring ruin upon them; and sins which we have all need to stand upon our guard against, and dread the consequences of.

1. Here is woe to those that set their hearts upon the wealth of the world, and place their happiness in that, and increase it to themselves by indirect and unlawful means, *ver.* 8. that join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place, no room for any body to live by them; but by their good-will they would be placed alone in the midst of the earth, would monopolize possessions and preferments, and ingross all profits and employments to themselves: not that it is a sin for those that have a house and a field, if they have wherewithal, to purchase another; but their fault is, (1.) That they are inordinate in their desires to enrich themselves, and make it their whole care and business to raise an estate; as if they had nothing to mind, nothing to seek, nothing to do in this world but that. They never knew when they have enough, but the more they have the more they would have; and, like the daughters of the horse-leech, they cry, Give, give; cannot enjoy what they have, nor do good with it for contriving and studying to make it more. They must have a variety of houses, a winter house, and a summer house, and if another man's house or field lie convenient to their's, as Naboth's vineyard to Ahab's, they must have that too, or they cannot be easy: And, (2.) That they are herein careless of others, nay, and injurious to them; they would live so as to let no body live but themselves, so that their insatiable covetings be gratified, their matter not what becomes of all about them; what encroachments they make upon their neighbours' rights, what hardships they put upon those that they have power over, or advantage against, nor what base and wicked arts they use to heap up treasure to themselves. They would swell so big as to fill all space, and yet are still unsatisfied, *Ecclef.* v. 10. As Alexander, who, when he fancied he had conquered the world, wept because he had not another world to conquer; *Deficiente terra, non impletur avaritia*: What, will ye be placed alone in the midst of the earth? so some read it; will you be so foolish as to desire it, when we have so much need of others' services, and so much comfort in others' society; so foolish as to expect it, that the earth should be forsaken for us? Job xviii. 4. when it is by multitudes that the earth is to be replenished? *An propter vos solos tanta terra creata est?* Lyra.

Now that which is threatened as the punishment of this sin is, that neither the houses nor the fields they were thus greedy of should turn to any account, *ver.* 9, 10. God whispered it to the prophet in his ear, as he speaks in a like case, *chap.* xxii. 14. *It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts*, as God told Samuel a thing in his ear, 1 Sam. ix. 15. he thought he heard it still sounding in his ears; but he proclaims it as he ought to do, upon the house tops, *Matt.* x. 27. (1.) That the house they were so fond of should be untenanted, should stand long empty, and so should yield them no rent, and go out of repair. *Many houses shall be desolate*, the people that should dwell in them being cut off by the sword, famine, or pestilence, or carried into captivity; or trade being dead, and poverty coming upon the country like an armed man, those that had been house-keepers were forced to become lodgers, or shift for themselves elsewhere. Even great and fair houses, that would invite tenants, and there being a scarcity of tenants, might be taken at low rates, yet shall stand empty without inhabitants: God created not the earth in vain, he formed it to be inhabited, *Isa.* xlv. 18. But men's projects are often frustrated, and what they frame answers not the intention. We have a saying, that fools build houses for wise men to live in, but sometimes it proves for no man to live in. God has many ways to empty the most populous cities. (2.) That the fields they were so fond of should be unfruitful, *ver.* 10. *Ten acres of vineyard shall yield only such a quantity of grapes as will make but one bath of wine*, which was about eight gallons; and the seed of an homer, a bushel's sowing of ground, shall yield but an ephah, which was the tenth part of an homer; so that through the barrenness of the ground, or the unseasonableness of the weather, they should not have past a tenth part of their seed again. Note, Those that set their hearts upon the world, will justly be disappointed in their expectations from it.

2. Here is a woe to those that dote upon the pleasures and delights of sense, *ver.* 11, 12. Sensuality ruins men as certainly as worldliness and oppression. As Christ pronounced a woe against those that are rich, so also against those that laugh now, and are full, *Luke* vi. 25, 26. and fare sumptuously, *Luke* xvi. 19.

Observe, 1. Who the sinners are, against whom this woe is denounced; (1.) They are such as are given to drink, they make it their business, have their hearts upon it, and overcharge themselves with it. They rise early to follow strong drink, as husbandmen and tradesmen do to follow their employments; as if they were afraid of losing time from that which is the greatest mispending of time. Whereas commonly they that are drunk are drunk in the night, when they have dispatched the business of the day; these neglect business, abandon it, and give up themselves to the service of the flesh, for they sit at their cups all day, and continue till night, till wine inflame them, inflame their lust; chambering and wantonness follow upon rioting and drunkenness; inflame their passions, for who but they have contentions and wounds without cause? *Prov.* xxiii. 29—33. They make a perfect trade of drinking: Nor seek they the shelter of the night for this work of darkness, a-menshamed of it, but count it a pleasure to riot in the day-time. See 2 Pet. ii. 13. (2.) They are such as are given to mirth; they have their feasts, and they are so merrily disposed, that they cannot dine or sup without music, musical instruments of all sorts, like David, *Amos* vi. 3. like Solomon, *Ecclef.* ii. 8. the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, must accompany the wine, that every sense may be gratified to a nicety; they take the timber and harp, *Job.* xxi. 12. The use of music is lawful in itself, but when it is excessive, when we set our hearts upon it, mispend time in it, so that it crowds out spiritual and divine pleasures, and draws away the heart from God, then it turns into sin to us. (3.) They are such as never give their mind to any thing that is serious: they regard not the work of the Lord, they observe not his power, wisdom, and goodness, in those creatures which they abuse and subject to vanity; nor the bounty of his providence, in giving them those good things which they make the food and fuel of their lusts. God's judgments have already seized them, and they are under the tokens of his displeasure, but they regard not, they consider not the hand of God in all these things; his hand is lifted up, but they will not see, because they will not disturb themselves in their pleasures, nor think what God is doing with them.

1. What the judgments are, which are denounced against them, and in part executed. It is here foretold,

(1.) That they should be dislodged; the land should spue out these drunkards, *ver.* 13. *My people* (so they called themselves, and were proud of it) *are therefore gone into captivity*; are as sure to go, as if they were gone already, because they have no knowledge; how should they, when by their excessive drinking they make fools and fools of themselves? They set up for wits, but because they regard not God's controversy with them, nor take any care to make their peace with him, they may truly be said to have no knowledge; and the reason is, because they will have none, inconsiderate and wilful, and therefore destroyed for lack of knowledge.

(2.) That they should be impoverished, and come to want that which they had wasted and abused to excess: *Even their glory are men of famine*, subject to it, and slain by it, and their multitude are dried up with thirst; both the great men and the common people are ready to perish for want of bread and water; this is the effect of the corn mitting, *ver.* 10. for the king himself is forced of the field, *Ecclef.* v. 9. And when the vintage fails, the drunkards are called upon to weep, because the new wine is cut off from their mouth, *Joel* i. 5. and not so much because now they want it, as because when they had it they abused it. It is just with God to make men want that for necessity, which they have abused to excess.

(3.) That multitudes should be cut off by famine and sword, *ver.* 14. *Therefore hell hath enlarged herself*; Tophet, the common burying-place, proves too little, and so many are there to be buried, that they shall be forced to enlarge it; the grave hath opened her mouth without measure, never saying, *It is enough*, *Prov.* xxx. 15, 16. It may be understood of the place of the damned; luxury and sensuality fill those regions of darkness and horror, there they are tormented who made a god of their belly, *Luke* xvi. 25. *Phil.* iii. 19.

(4.) That they should be humbled and abased, and all their honours laid in the dust. This will be done effectually by death and the grave; *their glory shall descend*, not only to the earth, but into it; it shall not descend after them, *Psal.* xlix. 17. to stand them in any stead on the other side death, but it shall die and be buried with them; poor glory, which will thus wither! Did they glory in their numbers? Their multitude shall go down to the pit, *Ezek.* xxxi. 18.—xxxii. 32. Did they glory in the figure they made? Their pomp shall be at an end; their shouts with which they triumphed and were attended. Did they glory in their mirth? Death will turn it into mourning; he that rejoiceth and reveleth, and never knows what it is to be serious, shall go thither where there is weeping and wailing. Thus the mean man and the mighty man meet together in the grave, and under mortifying judgments. Let a man be never so high, death will bring him low, never so mean, death will bring him lower; in the prospect of which the eyes of the lofty should now be humbled, *ver.* 15. It becomes those to look low that must shortly be laid low.

3. What the fruit of these judgments shall be.

1. God shall be glorified, *ver.* 16. He that is the Lord of hosts, and the holy God, shall be exalted and sanctified in the judgment and righteousness of these dispensations: His justice must be owned in bringing those low that exalted themselves, and herein he is glorified; (1.) As a God of irresistible power, he will herein be exalted as the Lord of hosts, that is able to break the strongest, humble the proudest, and tame the most unruly. Power is not exalted but in judgment: It is the honour of God, that though he has a mighty arm, yet judgment and justice are always the habitation of his throne, *Psal.* lxxxix. 13, 14. (2.) As a God of unspotted purity; he that is holy, infinitely holy, shall be sanctified, *i. e.* shall be owned and declared to be so in the righteous punishment of proud men. Note, When proud men are humbled, the great God is honoured, and ought to be honoured by us.

2. Good people shall be relieved and succoured, *ver.* 17. *Then shall the lambs feed after their manner*; the meek ones of the earth, who follow the Lamb, that were persecuted and put into fear by those proud oppressors, shall feed quietly, feed in the green pastures, and there shall be none to make them afraid. See *Ezek.* xxxiv. 14. When the enemies of the church are cut off, then have the churches rest; they shall feed at their pleasure, so some read it. *Blissed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in abundant peace*. They shall feed according to their order or capacity, so others read it; as they are able to hear the word, that bread of life.

3. The country shall be laid waste, and become a prey to the neighbours; the waste places of the fat ones, the possessions of those rich men that lived at their ease, those shall be eaten by strangers that were nothing akin to them. In the captivity the poor of the land were left for vine-dressers and husbandmen, 2 Kings xxv. 12. those were the lambs that fed in the pastures of the fat ones, which were laid in common for strangers to eat. When the church of the Jews, those fat ones, was laid waste, their privileges were transferred to the Gentiles, who had been long strangers; and the lambs of Christ's flock were welcome to them.

18. Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and as it were with a cart-rope: 19. That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it: 20. ¶ Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness: that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! 22. Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: 23. Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! 24. Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust, because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. 25. Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcases were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out. 26. ¶ And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth; and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly: 27. None shall be weary nor stumble amongst them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: 28. Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, and their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like whirlwind: 29. Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it. 30. And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

Here are, 1. Sins described, which will bring judgments upon a people: and this perhaps is not only a charge drawn up against the men of Judah that lived at that time, and the particular articles of that charge, though it may relate primarily to them, but is rather intended for warning to all people, in all ages, to take heed of these sins, as destructive both to particular persons and to communities, and exposing men to God's wrath and his righteous judgments.

Those are here said to be in a woeful condition,

1. That are eagerly set upon sin, and violent in their sinful pursuits, *ver. 18. that draw iniquity with the cords of vanity*; that take as much pains to sin, as the cattle do that draw in a team; put themselves to the stretch for the gratifying of their inordinate appetites; and, to humour a base lust, offer violence to nature itself! They think themselves as sure of compassing their wicked projects, as if they were pulling it to them with strong cart-ropes; but will find themselves disappointed, for they will prove cords of vanity, which will break when they come to any fire's; for *the righteous Lord will cut in sunder the cords of the wicked*, *Psal. cxxix. 4. Job iv. 8. Prov. xxii. 8.* They are by long custom and confirmed habits so hardened in sin, that they cannot get clear of it: those that sin through infirmity, are drawn away by sin; those that sin presumptuously, draw it to them, in spite of the oppositions of providence and the checks of conscience. Some by sin understand the punishment of sin, they pull God's judgments upon their own heads as it were with cart-ropes.

2. That set the justice of God at defiance, and challenge the Almighty to do his worst, *ver. 19. They say, Let him make speed and hasten his work*: this is the same language with that of the scoffers of the last days, that say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* And therefore it is, that like them they draw iniquity with the cords of vanity, are violent and daring in sin, and walk after their own lusts, *2 Pet. iii. 1—3, 4.* (1.) They ridicule the prophets, and banter them: it is in score that they call God the Holy One of Israel, because the prophets used with great veneration to call him so, (2.) They will not believe the revelation of God's wrath from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness; unless they see it executed, they will not know it, as if the curse were *brutum fulmen*, and all the threatenings of the word bugbears to frighten fools and children. (3.) If God should appear against them, as he hath threatened, yet they think themselves able to make their part good with him, and provoke him to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he, *1 Cor. x. 22.* We have heard his word, but it is all talk, let him hasten his work, we shall shift for ourselves well enough. Note, Those that wilfully persist in sin consider not the power of God's anger.

3. That confound and overthrow the distinctions between moral good and evil, that call evil good, and good evil, *ver. 20.* that not only live in the omission of that which is good, but condemn it, argue against it, and because they will not practice it themselves, run it down in others, and fasten ill characters upon it; not only do that which is evil, but justify it, and applaud it, and recommend it to others as safe and good. Note, 1. Virtue and piety is good, for it is light and sweet, it is pleasant and right; but sin and wickedness is evil, it is darkness, all the fruit of ignorance and mistake, and it will be bitterness in the latter end. 2. Those do a great deal of wrong to God and religion, and conscience, to their own souls, and to the souls of others, who misrepresent these and put false colours upon them; who call drunkenness good fellowship, and covetousness good husbandry, and when they persecute the people of God, think they do him good service: and on the other hand, who call seriousness ill-nature, and sober singularity ill-breeding; who say all manner of evil falsely concerning the ways of godliness, and do what they can to form in men's minds prejudices against them: and this in defiance of evidence as plain and convincing as that of sense, by which we distinguish beyond contradiction between light and darkness, and that which to the taste is sweet and bitter.

4. That though they are guilty of such gross mistakes as these, yet they have a great opinion of their own judgments, and value themselves mightily upon their understanding, *ver. 21.* they are *wise in their own eyes*; they think themselves able to disprove and baffle the reproofs and convictions of God's word, and to evade and elude both the scarecrows and the reaches of his judgments; that they can outwit infinite wisdom, and countermining providence itself. Or it may be taken more generally; God resists the proud, those particularly that are conceited of their own wisdom, and lean to their own understanding, such must become fools, that they may be truly wise, or else at their end they shall appear to be fools before all the world.

5. That they gloried in it, as a great accomplishment, that they were able to bear a great deal of strong liquor without being overcome by it, *ver. 22. That are mighty to drink wine*, and use their strength and vigour, not in the service of their country, but in the service of their lusts. Let drunkards know from this scripture, that (1.) They ungratefully abuse their bodily strength, which God hath given them for good purposes, and by degrees cannot but weaken it. (2.) It will not excuse them from the guilt of drunkenness, that they can drink hard and yet keep their feet. (3.) Those that boast of their drinking down others, glory in their shame. (4.) How light soever men make of their drunkenness, it is a sin which will certainly lay them open to the wrath and curse of God.

6. That their judges in their administrations perverted justice, and went counter to all the rules of equity, *ver. 23.* This followed upon the former, they drink and forget the law, *Prov. xxxi. 5.* and err through wine, *Isa. xxviii. 7.* and take bribes, that they may have wherewithal to maintain their luxury. They justify the wicked for reward, and find some pretence or other to clear him from his guilt, and shelter him from punishment; and they condemn the innocent, and take away their righteousness from them, i. e. over-rule their pleas, deprive them of the means of clearing up their innocence, and give judgment against them. In causes between man and man, might and money would at any time prevail against right and justice, and he that never was so plainly in the wrong, yet with a small bribe should carry the cause, and recover costs. In criminal causes, though the prisoner never so plainly appeared to be guilty, yet for a reward they would acquit him; if he were innocent, yet if he did not see them well, nay, if they were seduced by the malicious prosecutor, or they themselves had spleen against him, they would condemn him.

2. The judgments described which these sins would bring upon them. Let not those expect to live easily that live thus wickedly; for the righteous God will take vengeance, *ver. 14. ad finem.* Where we may observe,

1. How complete this ruin will be, and how necessarily and unavoidably it will follow upon their sins. He had compared his people to a vine, *ver. 7.* well fixed, and which it was hoped would be flourishing and fruitful; but the grace of God towards it was received in vain, and then the root became rottenness, being dried up from beneath, and the blossom would of course blow off as dust, as a light and worthless thing, *Job xviii. 16.* Sin weakens the strength, the root of a people, so that they are easily rooted up; it detaceth the beauty, the blossoms of a people, and takes away the hopes or fruit. The sin of unfruitfulness is punished with the plague of unfruitfulness. Sinners make themselves as stubble and chaff, combustible matter, proper fuel to the fire of God's wrath, which then of course devours and consumes them, as *the fire devours the stubble*, and nobody can hinder it or cares to hinder. Chaff is consumed unhelped and unpitied.

2. How just the ruin will be; *Because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts*, and would not have him to reign over them; and as the law of Moses was rejected and thrown off, so the word of the holy One of Israel by his servants the prophets, putting them in mind of his law, and calling them to obedience, was despised and disregarded. God doth not reject men for every transgression of his law and word; but when his word is despised, and his law cast away, what can they expect but that God should utterly abandon them?

3. Whence this ruin should come, *ver. 25.* It is destruction from the Almighty. (1.) The justice of God appoints it; for that is *the danger of the Lord* which is kindled against his people, his necessary vindication of his honour of his holiness and authority. (2.) The power of God effects it; he had stretched forth his hand against them; that hand which had many a time been stretched out for them against their enemies, is now stretched out against them, at full length and in its full strength; and *who knows the power of his anger?* Whether they are sensible of it or no, it is God that hath smitten them, hath blasted their vine and made it wither.

4. The consequence and continuance of this ruin. When God comes forth in wrath against a people, the hills tremble, fear seizeth even the great men that are strong and high, the earth shakes under men and is ready to sink; and as this feels dreadful, (what doth more so than an earthquake?) so what sight can be more frightful than the carcases of men torn with dogs, or thrown as dung, (so the margin reads it) *in the midst of the streets?* This intimates that great multitudes should be slain, not only soldiers in the field of battle, but the inhabitants of their cities put to the sword in cold blood, and that the survivors would neither have hands nor hearts to bury them. This is very dreadful; and yet such is the merit of sin, that for all this God's anger is not turned away; that fire will burn as long as there remains any of the stubble and chaff to be fuel for it; and his hand which he stretched forth against his people to smite them, because they do not by prayer take hold of it, nor by reformation submit themselves to it, is stretched out still.

5. The instruments that should be employed in bringing this ruin upon them; it should be done by the incursions of a foreign enemy, that should lay all waste: no particular enemy is named, and therefore we are to take it as a prediction of all the several judgments of this kind which God brought upon the Jews, Sennacherib's invasion soon after, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans first, and at last by the Romans; and I think it is to be looked upon also as a threatening of the like desolation of those countries which harbour and countenance those sins, mentioned in the foregoing verses; it is an exposition of those woes.

When God designs the ruin of a provoking people,

1. He can send a great way off for instruments to be employed in it; he can raise forces from afar, and summon them from the end of the earth to attend his service, *ver. 26.* Those that know him not, yet are made use of to fulfil his counsel, when by reason of their distance they can scarce be supposed to have any ends of their own to serve. If God set up his standard, he can incline men's hearts to lift themselves under it; though perhaps themselves know not why or wherefore. When the Lord of hosts is pleased to make a general muster of the forces he has at his command, he hath a great army presently, *Joel ii. 2—11.* He needs not sound a trumpet or beat a drum to give them notice, or to animate them, no, he doth but hiss to them, or rather whistle to them, and that is enough; they hear that, and that puts courage into them. Note, God has all the creatures at his beck.

2. He can make them come into the service with incredible expedition: *Behold they shall come with speed swiftly.* Note, (1.) Those that will do God's work must not loiter, must not linger, nor shall they when his time

is come. (2.) Those that defy God's judgments, will be ashamed of their insolence when it is too late; they said scornfully, *ver. 19. Let him make speed, let him hasten his work,* and they shall find to their terror and confusion that so he will; *In one hour is the judgment come.*

3. He can carry them on in the service with amazing forwardness and fury. This is described here in very elegant and lofty expressions, *ver. 27, 28, 29, 30.* (1.) Though their marches be very long, yet none among them shall be weary: so desirous shall they be to engage, that they shall forget their weariness, and make no complaints of it. (2.) Though the way be rough, and perhaps embarrassed by the usual policies of war, yet none among them shall stumble, but all the difficulties in their way shall easily be got over. (3.) Though they are forced to keep constant watch, yet none shall slumber nor sleep, so intent shall they be upon their work, in prospect of having the plunder of the city for their pains. (4.) They shall not desire any rest or relaxation; they shall not put off their clothes, nor loose the girdle of their loins, but shall always have their belts on, and swords by their sides. (5.) They shall not meet with the least hindrance to retard their march, or oblige them to halt, not a *latchet of their shoes shall be broken*, which they must stay to mend, as *Josh. ix. 13.* (6.) Their arms and ammunition should all be fixed and in a good posture: their arrows sharp to wound deep, and all their bows bent, none unfurled, for they expect to be upon action presently. (7.) Their horses and chariots of war all fit for service: their horses so strong, so hardy, that their hoofs should be like flint, far from being beaten, or made tender by their long march: and the wheels of their chariots not broken, or battered, or out of repair, but swift like a whirlwind, turning round so strongly upon their axle-trees. (8.) All the soldiers bold and daring; *ver. 29.* their roaring or shouting before a battle shall be like a lion, who with his roaring animates himself, and terrifies all about him; they that would not hear the voice of God speaking to them by his prophets, but stopped their ears against their charms, shall be made to hear the voice of their enemies roaring against them, and shall not be able to turn a deaf ear to it; they shall *roar like the roaring of the sea* in a storm; it roars and threatens to swallow up, as the lion roars and threatens to tear in pieces. (9.) There shall not be the least prospect of relief or succour; the enemy shall come in like a flood, and there shall be none to lift up a standard against him; he shall seize the prey, and none shall deliver it, nor shall be able to deliver it, nay, none shall so much as dare to attempt the deliverance of it, but give it for gone. Let the distressed look which way they will, every thing appears dismal; for if God frowns upon us, how can any creature smile? (1.) Look round to the earth, to the land, to that land that used to be a land of light, and the joy of the whole earth, and bold darkness and sorrow, all frightful, all mournful, nothing hopeful. (2.) Look up to heaven, and there the light is darkened, where one would expect to have found it. If the light is darkened in the heavens, how great is that darkness! If God hide his face, no marvel the heavens hide theirs and appear gloomy, *Job xxxiv. 29.* It is our wisdom by keeping a good conscience to keep all clear between us and heaven, that we may have light from above, when clouds and darkness are round about us.

C H A P. VI.

*Hilberto it should seem Isaiah had prophesied as a candidate, having only a virtual and implicit commission; but here we have him (if I may so speak) solemnly ordained and set apart to the prophetic office by a more express explicit commission, as his work grew more upon his hands: or perhaps having seen little success of his ministry, he began to think of giving it up; and therefore God saw fit to renew his commission here in this chapter, in such a manner as might excite and encourage his zeal and industry in the execution of it, though he seemed to labour in vain. In this chapter we have, (1.) A very awful vision which Isaiah saw of the glory of God, *ver. 1—4.* The sight put him into, *ver. 5.* and the relief given him against that sight by an assurance of the pardon of his sins, *ver. 6, 7.* (2.) A very awful commission which Isaiah received to go as a prophet in God's name, *ver. 8.* by his preaching to barden the impenitent in sin, and ripen them for ruin, *ver. 9, 10, 11, 12.* Yet with a reservation of mercy for a remnant, *ver. 13.* And it was as an evangelical prophet that these things were shewed him, and said to him.*

1. **I**N the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

The vision which Isaiah saw when he was, as is said of Samuel, *established to be a prophet of the Lord*, 1 Sam. iii. 23. was intended, (1.) To confirm his faith, that he might himself be abundantly satisfied of the truth of those things which should afterwards be made known to him. Thus God opened the communications of himself to him, but such visions needed not to be afterwards repeated upon every revelation. Thus God appeared at first as a God of glory to Abraham, *Acts vii. 2.* and to Moses, *Exod. iii. 2.* Ezekiel's prophecies and St. John's begins with visions of the divine glory. (2.) To work upon his affections, that he might be possessed with such a reverence of God, as would both quicken him and fix him to his service. They that are to teach others the knowledge of God, ought to be well acquainted with him themselves.

This vision is dated for the greater certainty of it, it was in the year that king Uzziah died, who had reigned for the most part as prosperously and well as any of the kings of Judah, and reigned very long, above fifty years: about the time that he died, Isaiah saw this vision of God upon a throne: for when the breath of princes goes forth, and they return to their earth, this is our comfort, that the *Lord shall reign for ever*, *Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4—10.* Israel's king dies, but Israel's God still lives. From the mortality of great and good men, we should take occasion to look up with an eye of faith to the King eternal, immortal. King Uzziah died under a cloud, for he was shut up as a leper till the day of his death: as the lives of princes have their periods, so their glory is often eclipsed; but as God is ever-living, so his glory is everlasting. King Uzziah dies in an hospital, but the King of kings still sits upon his throne.

What the prophet here saw is revealed to us, that we mixing faith with that revelation, may in it as in a glass behold the glory of the Lord; let us

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turn aside therefore and see this great sight with humble reverence.

1. See God upon his throne, and that throne high and lifted up, not only above other thrones, as it transcends them, but over other thrones, as it rules and commands them. Isaiah saw not Jehovah, the essence of God, no man hath seen that or can see it: but Adonai, his dominion; he saw the Lord Jesus; so this vision is explained, *John xii. 41.* that Isaiah now saw Christ's glory and spoke of him; which is an incontestible proof of the divinity of our Saviour: He it is, who, when after his resurrection he sat down on the right hand of God, did but sit down where he was before; *John xvii. 5.* See the rest of the Eternal Mind, he saw the Lord sitting, *Psal. xxix. 10.* See the sovereignty of the Eternal Monarch; he sits upon a throne, a throne of glory, before which we must worship; a throne of government under which we must be subject, and a throne of grace to which we may come boldly. This throne is high and lifted up above all competition and contradiction.

2. See his temple, his church on earth, filled with the manifestations of his glory. His throne being erected at the door of the temple, (as princes sit in judgment at the gates) his train, the skirts of his robes, filled the temple, the whole world; for it is all God's temple; and as the heaven is his throne, so the earth is his footstool; or rather the church, which is filled, enriched, and beautified with the tokens of God's special presence.

3. See the bright and blessed attendants on his throne, in and by whom his glory is celebrated, and his government served, *ver. 2.* Above the throne, as it were hovering about it, or nigh to the throne, bowing before it with an eye to it, the seraphim stood, the holy angels, who are called *seraphim* burners; for he maketh his ministers a flaming fire, *Psal. civ. 4.* they burn in love to God, and zeal for his glory against sin, and he makes use of them as instruments of his wrath when he is a consuming fire to his enemies. Whether they were only two or four, or (as I rather think) an innumerable company of angels that Isaiah saw, is uncertain; see *Dan. vii. 10.* Note, It is the glory of the angels that they are a seraphim, have heat proportionable to their light, have not only abundance of divine knowledge, but of holy love.

Special notice is taken of their wings, and of no other part of their appearance, because of the use they made of them, which is designed for instruction to us. They had each of them six wings, not stretched upwards as those whom Ezekiel saw, *chap. i. 11.* but, (1.) Four were made use of for covering, as the wings of a dove: sitting are; with the two upper wings next the head they covered their faces, and with the two lower wings they covered their feet, or lower parts. This speaks their great humility and reverence in their attendance upon God, for he is greatly feared in the assembly of those saints, *Psal. lxxxix. 7.* They not only cover their feet, those members of the body which are less honorable, 1 Cor. xii. 23. but even their faces; though angels' faces doubtless are much fairer than those of the children of men, *Act. vi. 15.* yet in the presence of God they cover them, because they cannot bear the dazzling lustre of the divine glory, and because being conscious of an infinite distance from the divine perfection, they are ashamed to shew their faces before the holy God, who *chargeth even his angels with folly*, if they should offer to vie with him, *Job iv. 18.* If angels be thus reverent in their attendance on God, with what godly fear should we approach his throne! else we do not the will of God as the angels do it. Yet Moses when he went into the mount with God, took the veil from off his face, 2 Cor. iii. 18. (2.) Two were made use of for flight; when they are sent on God's errands they fly swiftly, *Dan. ix. 21.* more swiftly with their own wings, than if they flew on the wings of the wind. This teaches us to do the work of God with cheerfulness and expedition: Do angels come up on the wing from heaven to earth to minister for our good, and shall we not fear upon the wing from earth to heaven to share with them in their glory? *Luke xx. 36.*

4. Hear the anthem or song of praise, which the angels sing to the honour of him that sits up on the throne, *ver. 3.* Observe, (1.) How this song was sung; with zeal and fervency they cried aloud; and with unanimity they cried one to another, or one with another: they sung alternately, but in concert, and without the least jarring voice to interrupt the harmony. (2.) What the song was, it is the same with that which is sung by the four living creatures, *Rev. iv. 6.* Note, (1.) Praising God always was, and will be to eternity, the work of heaven, and the constant employment of blessed spirits above, *Psal. lxxxiv. 4.* (2.) The church above is the same in its praises; there is no change of times or notes there.

Two things the seraphim here give God the praise of.

(1.) His infinite perfections in himself. Here is one of the most glorious titles praised, he is the Lord of hosts, of their hosts, of all hosts: and one of his most glorious attributes, his holiness, without which his being the Lord of hosts, (or as it is in the parallel place, *Rev. iv. 8. The Lord God Almighty*) could not be so much as it is the matter of our joy and praise; for power, without purity to guide it, would be a terror to mankind. None of all the divine attributes are celebrated in scripture so as this is: God's power was spoken twice, *Psal. lxxii. 10.* but his holiness thrice, *Holy, holy, holy.* This speaks, (1.) The zeal and fervency of the angels in praising God, they even want words to express themselves, and therefore repeat the same again. (2.) The particular pleasure they take in contemplating the holiness of God; this is a subject they love to dwell upon, to harp upon, and are loth to leave it. (3.) The superlative excellency of God's holiness above that of the purest creatures. He is holy, thrice holy, infinitely holy, originally, perfectly, and eternally so. (4.) It may refer to the three persons in the godhead, holy Father, holy Son, and holy Spirit; for it follows, *ver. 8. Who will go for us?* Or perhaps to that which was, and is, and is to come; for that title of God's honour is added to this song, *Rev. iv. 8.* Some make the angels here to applaud the equity of that sentence, which God was now about to pronounce upon the Jewish nation. Herein he was, and is, and will be holy: his ways are equal.

(2.) The manifestation of these to the children of men, the earth is full of his glory, of the glory of his power and purity; for he is holy in all his works, *Psal. cxlv. 17.* The Jews thought the glory of God should be confined to their land; but it is here intimated, that in gospel-times (which are pointed to in this chapter) the glory of God should fill all the earth. The glory of his holiness, which is indeed the glory of all his other attributes; this then filled the temple, *ver. 1.* but in the latter days the earth shall be full of it.

5. Observe the marks and tokens of terror with which the temple was filled upon this vision of the divine glory, *ver. 4.* (1.) The house was shaken; not only the door, but even the posts of the door, which were firmly fixed, moved at the voice of him that cried, at the voice of God that called to judgment, *Psal. l. 4.* at the voice of the angel that praised him. There are voices in heaven sufficient to drown all the noises of the many waters in this lower world, *Psal. xciii. 3, 4.* This violent concussion of the temple was an indication of God's wrath and displeasure against the people for their sins; it was an earnest of the destruction of it and the city, by the Babylonians first, and afterwards by the Romans; and it was designed to strike an awe upon us: Shall walls and posts tremble before God, and shall not we tremble? (2.) The house was darkened: it was filled with smoke, which was as a cloud spread upon the face of his throne, *Job xxvi. 2.* we cannot take

a full view of it, nor order our speech concerning it, by reason of darkness. In the temple above there will be no smoke, but every thing will be seen clearly; there God dwells in light, here he makes darkness his pavilion, 2 Chron. vi. 1.

5. ¶ Then said I, Woe is me: for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king, the LORD of hosts. 6. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. 7. And he laid it upon thy mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8. Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

Our curiosity would lead us to enquire further concerning the seraphim, their songs, and their services; but here we leave them, and must attend to what passed between God and his prophet; *secret things belong not to us*, the secret things of the world of angels, but things revealed to and by the prophets, which concern the administration of God's kingdom among men. Now here we have,

1. The mighty consternation that the prophet was put into by the vision which he saw of the glory of God, *ver. 5. Then said I, Woe is me.* I should have said, Blessed art thou who hast been thus highly favoured, highly honoured, and dignified for a time with the privilege of those glorious beings that always behold the face of our father: blessed were those eyes which saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and those ears which heard the angels' praises. And one would think he should have said, Happy am I, for ever happy, nothing now shall trouble me, nothing make me blush or tremble; no, quite contrary, he cries out, *Woe is me, for I am undone.* Alas for me! I am a gone man, *I shall surely die*, Judges xiii. 22. and vi. 22. I am silenced, I am struck dumb, struck dead. Thus Daniel, when he heard the words of the angel, *became dumb*, and there was *no strength, no breath left in him*, Dan. x. 15—17. Observe,

(1.) What the prophet reflected upon in himself, which terrified him: I am undone if God deal with me in strict justice, for I have made myself obnoxious to his displeasure, *because I am a man of unclean lips.* Some think he refers particularly to some rash word he had spoken, or to his sinful silence in not reproofing sin with the boldness and freedom that was necessary: a sin which God's ministers have too much cause to charge themselves with, and to blush at the remembrance of it. But it may be taken more generally: *I am a sinner*; particularly *I have offended in word*, and who is there that doth not? James iii. 2. We all have reason to bewail it before the Lord: (1.) That we are of unclean lips ourselves; our lips not consecrated to God: he has not had the *first-fruits of our lips*, Heb. xiii. 15. and therefore they are counted common and unclean, *uncircumcised lips*, Exod. vi. 30. Nay, they have been polluted with sin, we have spoken the language of an unclean heart, that evil communication corrupts good manners, and whereby many have been defiled. We are unworthy and unmeet to take God's name into our lips: With what a pure lip did the angels praise God? but, faith the prophet, I cannot praise him so, for *I am a man of unclean lips.* The best men in the world have reason to be ashamed of themselves and the best of their services, when they come to compare with the holy angels. The angels had celebrated the purity and holiness of God; and therefore the prophet when he reflects upon sin, calls it uncleanness; for that is the sinfulness of sin, its contrariety to the holy nature of God, and upon that account especially it should appear both hateful and frightful to us. The impurity of our lips ought to be the grief of our souls, for by our words we shall be justified or condemned. (2.) That we dwell among those that are so too. We have reason to lament it, that not we ourselves only are polluted; but that the nature and race of mankind is so, the disease is hereditary and epidemical; which is so far from lessening our guilt, that it should rather increase our grief, especially considering that we have not done what we might have done for the cleansing of the pollution of other people's lips: nay, we have rather learned their way and spoken their language, as Joseph in Egypt learned the courtier's oath, Gen. xlii. 16. *I dwell in the midst of a people*, who by their impudent sinnings are pulling down desolating judgments upon the land, which I who am a sinner too justly may expect to be involved in.

(2.) What gave occasion for these sad reflections at this time: *Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*; he saw God's sovereignty incontestible, he is the King; and his power irresistible, he is the Lord of hosts: these are comfortable truths to God's people, and yet they ought to strike an awe upon us. Note, A believing sight of God's glorious majesty should affect us all with reverence and godly fear. We have reason to be abashed in the sense of that infinite distance that there is betwixt us and God, and our own sinfulness and vileness before him, and to be afraid of his displeasure: we are undone if there be not a mediator between us and this holy God, 1 Sam. vi. 20. Isaiah was thus humbled to prepare him for the honour he was now to be called to as a prophet. Note, Those are fittest to be employed for God that are low in their own eyes, and are made deeply sensible of their own weakness and unworthiness.

2. The silencing of the prophet's fears by the good words and comfortable words with which the angel answered him, *ver. 6, 7.* one of the seraphims immediately flew to him, to purify him, and so to pacify him. Note, 1. God hath strong consolations ready for holy mourners: they that humble themselves in penitential shame and fear, shall soon be encouraged and exalted; they that are struck down with the visions of God's glory, shall soon be raised up again with the visits of his grace, he that tears will heal. 2. Angels are ministering spirits, for the good of the saints, for the spiritual good. Here was one of the seraphims dismissed for a time from attending on the throne of God's glory to be a messenger of his grace to a good man; and so well pleased was he with the office, that he came flying to him. To our Lord Jesus himself in his agony there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him, Luke xxii. 43.

Here is, 1. A comfortable sign given him of the purging away of his sin. The seraph brought a live coal from the altar, and touched his lips with it; not to hurt them, but to heal them; not to cauterise, but to cleanse them: for there were purifications by fire, as well as by water, and the filth of Jerusalem was purged by the *spirit of burning*, Isa. iv. 4. The blessed Spirit works as fire, Matt. iii. 11. The seraph being himself kindled with a divine fire, put life into the prophet to make him also zealously affected; for the way to purge the lips from the uncleanness of sin, is to fire the soul with the love of God. This live-coal was taken from off the altar, either the altar of incense, or that of burnt offerings; for they had both of them fire burning on them continually. Nothing is powerful to cleanse and

comfort the soul, but what is taken from Christ's satisfaction, and the intercession he ever lives to make in the virtue of that satisfaction: It must be a coal from his altar that must put fire into us and be our peace; it will not be done with strange fire.

2. An explication of this sign: *Lo, this hath touched thy lips*, to assure thee of this, that *thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.* The guilt of thy sin is removed by pardoning mercy, the guilt of thy tongue-sins, thy corrupt disposition to sin, is removed by renewing grace, and therefore nothing can hinder thee from being accepted with God as a worshipper, in comfort with the holy angel, or from being employed for God as a messenger to the children of men. Those only who are thus purged from an evil conscience, are prepared to *serve the living God*, Heb. ix. 14. The taking away of sin is necessary to our speaking with confidence and comfort, either to God in prayer, or from God in preaching. Nor are any so fit to display to others the riches and power of gospel-grace, as those who have themselves tasted the sweetness, and felt the influence of that grace; and those shall have their sin taken away who complain of it as a burden, and see themselves in danger of being undone by it.

3. The renewing of the prophet's mission, *ver. 8.* Here is a communication between God and Isaiah about this matter. Those that would assist others in their correspondence with God, must not themselves be strangers to it; for how can we expect that God shall speak by us, if we never heard him speaking to us? or that we should be accepted as the mouth of others to God, if we never spoke to him heartily for ourselves? Observe here,

(1.) The counsel of God concerning Isaiah's mission. God is here brought in after the manner of men, deliberating and advising with himself, *Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?* God needs not either to be counselled by others, or to consult with himself; he knows what he will do, but thus he would shew us that there is a counsel in his whole will; and teach us to consider our ways, and particularly that the sending forth of ministers is a work not to be done but upon mature deliberation.

Observe, (1.) Who it is that is consulting: it is the Lord, God in his glory, whom he saw upon his throne high and lifted up. It puts an honour upon the ministry, that when God would send a prophet to speak in his name, he appeared in all the glories of the upper world: ministers are the ambassadors of the King of kings: how mean soever they are, he that sends them is great: It is God in three persons; who will go for us? as Gen. i. 26. *Let us make man*: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; they all concur as in the creating, so in the redeeming and governing of man. Ministers are ordained in the same name into which all Christians are baptized. (2.) What the consultation is: *Whom shall I send? and who will go?* Some think it refers to the particular message of wrath against Israel, *ver. 9, 10.* who will be willing to go on such a melancholy errand? on which they will go in the bitterness of their souls, Ezek. iii. 14. But I rather take it more largely, for all those messages which he was entrusted to deliver in God's name to that people, in which that hardening work was by no means the primary intention, but a secondary effect of them, 2 Cor. ii. 14. *Whom shall I send?* Intimating that the business was such as required a choice and well accomplished messenger, Jer. xlix. 19. God now appeared attended with holy angels, and yet asks, *Whom shall I send?* for he would send them a prophet from among their brethren, Heb. ii. 5. Note, 1. It is a rare thing to find one that is fit to go for God, and to carry his mind by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, and who are themselves concerned in the messages they bring. They are workers together with God, who are sinners and sufferers together with us. 2. It is a rare thing to find one that is fit to go for God, and to carry his messages to the children of men; *Whom shall I send?* Who is sufficient? Such a degree of courage for God, and concern for the souls of men as is necessary to make a man faithful, and withal such an insight into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven as is necessary to make a man skillful, are seldom to be met with. Such an interpreter of the mind of God is one of a thousand, Job xxxiii. 23. 3. None are allowed to go for God, but those that are sent by him; he will own none but those whom he appoints, Rom. x. 15. It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, 1 Tim. i. 13.

(2.) The consent of Isaiah to it; *Then said I, here am I, send me.* He was to go on a melancholy errand; the office seemed to go a begging, and every body declined it, and yet Isaiah offered himself to the service. It is an honour to be singular in appearing for God, Judges v. 17, 18. We must not say, I would go if I thought I should have good success, but I will go and leave the success to God; Here am I now, send me. Isaiah had been himself in a melancholy frame, *ver. 5.* full of doubts and fears, but now he had the assurance of the pardon of his sin; the clouds were blown over, and he was fit for service and forward to it. What he saith, speaks, (1.) His readiness, here am I; a volunteer, not pressed into their service; *Behold me*, so the word is. God saith to us, *Behold me*, Isa. lxxv. 1. and here I am. Isa. lviii. 9. even before we call, let us say so to him when he doth call. (2.) His resolution; *Here I am*, ready to encounter the greatest difficulties; *I have set my face as a flint*; compare this with Isa. i. 4, 5, 6, 7. (3.) His referring himself to God; send me whither thou wilt, make what use thou pleasest of me. Send me, i. e. Lord, give me commission and full instruction; send me, and then no doubt thou wilt stand by me. And it is a great comfort to those whom God sends, that they go for God, and may therefore speak in his name, as having authority, and be assured that he will bear them out.

9. ¶ And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. 11. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, 12. And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. 13. ¶ But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

God takes Isaiah at his word, and here sends him on a strange errand, to foretell the ruin of his people, and even to ripen them for that ruin; to preach that which by their abuse of it would be to them a favour of death unto death. And this was to be a type and figure of the state of the Jewish church in the days of the Messiah, when they should obstinately reject the gospel, and should thereupon be rejected of God. These verses are quoted

in part, or referred to six times in the New Testament: which intimates, that in good times these spiritual judgments would be most ordinarily inflicted; and though they make the least noise, and come not with observation, yet they are of all other the most dreadful.

Isaiah is here given to understand these four things:

1. That the generality of the people to whom he was sent would turn a deaf ear to his preaching, and wilfully shut their eyes against all the discoveries of the mind and will of God he had to make to them. *ver. 9. Go and tell this people, this foolish wretched people, tell them the truth, tell them how stupid and foolish they are: Isaiah must preach to them, and they will hear him indeed, but that is all; they will not heed him, they will not understand him, i. e. they will not take any pains, nor use that application of mind which is necessary to the understanding of him; they are prejudiced against that which is the true intent and meaning of what he saith, and therefore they will not understand him, or pretend they do not. They see indeed; for the vision is made plain on tables, so that he that runs may read it, but they perceive not their own concern in it; it is to them as a tale that is told. Note, There are many who hear the sound of God's word, but do not feel the power of it.*

2. That so far as they would not be made better by his ministry, they should be made worse by it: they that were wilfully blind, should be judicially blinded, *ver. 10.* They will not understand or perceive thee, and therefore thou shalt be instrumental to make their heart fat, senseless, and sensual, and so to make their ears yet more heavy, and to shut their eyes the closer; so that at length their recovery and repentance will become utterly impossible; they shall no more see with their eyes the danger they are in, the ruin they are upon the brink of, or the way of escape from it; they shall no more hear with their ears the warnings and instructions that are given them, nor understand with their heart the things that belong to their peace, so as to be converted from the error of their ways, and so healed. Note, (1.) The conversion of sinners is the healing of them. (2.) A right understanding is necessary to conversion. (3.) God sometimes in a way of righteous judgment gives men up to blindness of mind and strong delusions, because they would not receive the truth in the love of it, *2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.* He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. (4.) Even the word of God oftentimes proves a means of doing this: The evangelical prophet himself makes the heart of this people fat, not only as he foretells it, passeth this sentence upon them in God's name, and seals them under it; but as his preaching had a tendency to it, rocking some asleep in security, to whom it was a lovely song, and making others more outrageous, to whom it was a reproach, they were not all to bear it. Some looked upon the word as a privilege, and their convictions were smothered by it, *Jer. vii. 4.* others looked upon it as a provocation, and their corruptions were exasperated by it.

3. That the consequence of this word be their utter ruin, *ver. 11, 12.* The prophet had nothing to object against the justice of this sentence, nor could he refuse to go upon such an errand, but asks, *Lord, how long?* An abrupt question; shall it always be thus? Must I and other prophets always labour in vain among them, and will things never be better? Or (as should seem by the answer) Lord, what will it come to at last? What will be in the end hereof? In answer to which he is told, that it should issue in the final destruction of the Jewish church and nation. When the word of God, especially the word of the gospel, hath been thus abused by them, they shall be unchurched, and consequently undone. Their cities shall be uninhabited, and their country-houses too; the land shall be untilled, desolate with desolation, as it is in the margin; the people that should replenish the houses, and cultivate the ground, being all cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence; and those that escape with their lives being removed far away into captivity, so that there shall be a great and general forsaking in the midst of the land; that populous country shall become desert, and that glory of all lands shall be abandoned. Note, Spiritual judgments often bring temporal judgments along with them, on persons and places. This was in part fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, when the land being left desolate, enjoyed her sabbaths seventy years: but the foregoing predictions being so expressly applied in the New Testament to the Jews in our Saviour's time, doubtless this points at the final destruction of that people by the Romans, in which it had a complete accomplishment; and the effects of it that people and that land remain under to this day.

4. That yet a remnant should be reserved to be the monuments of mercy, *ver. 13.* There was so in the last destruction of the Jewish nation, *Rom. xi. 5. at this present time there is a remnant,* for so it was written here, but in it shall be a tenth, a certain number; but a very small number in comparison with the multitude that shall perish in their unbelief: and it is that which under the law was God's proportion; they shall be consecrated to God as the tithes were, and shall be for his service and honour. Concerning this tithe, this saved remnant, we are here told; (1.) That it shall return, *chap. vii. 3.—x. 23.* shall return from sin to God and duty; shall return out of captivity to their own land. God will turn them, and they shall be turned. (2.) That it shall be eaten, i. e. it shall be accepted of God, as the tithe was, which was meat in God's house, *Mal. iii. 10.* The saving of this remnant shall be meat to the faith and hope of those that wish well to God's kingdom. (3.) That it shall be like a timber-tree in winter, which has life, though it has no leaves; as a teil-tree, and as an oak whose substance is in them, even then when they cast their leaves; so this remnant, though they may be stript of their outward prosperity, and share with others in common calamities, yet they shall recover themselves, as a tree in the spring, and flourish again; though they fall, they shall not be utterly cut down: there is hope of a tree though it be cut down, that it will sprout again, *Job xiv. 7.* (4.) That this distinguished remnant shall be the stay and support of the public interests: the holy seed in the soul is the substance of the man; a principle of grace reigning in the heart will keep life there; he that is born of God hath his seed remaining in him, *1 John iii. 9.* So the holy seed in the land is the substance of the land, keeps it from being quite dissolved, and bears up the pillars of it, *Psal. lxxv. 3.* See *Isa. i. 9.* Some read the foregoing clause with this thus: *As the support at Shallecheth is in the elm and the oaks, so the holy seed is the substance thereof;* as the trees that grow on either side of the causeway, the raised-way, or terrace-walk that leads from the king's palace to the temple, *1 Kings x. 5.* at the gate of Shallecheth, *1 Chron. xxvi. 16.* support the causeway by keeping up the earth, which could otherwise be crumbling away; so the small residue of religious, serious, praying-people, are the support of the state, and help to keep things together, and save them from going to decay. Some make the holy seed to be Christ; the Jewish nation was therefore saved from utter ruin, because out of it as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come, *Rom. ix. 5. destroy it not, for that blessing is in it,* *Isa. lxxv. 8.* and when that blessing was come, it was soon destroyed. Now the consideration of this is designed for the support of the prophet in his work. Though far the greater part should perish in their unbelief, yet to some his word should be a favour of life unto life. Ministers do not wholly lose their labour, if they be but instrumental to save one poor soul.

This chapter is an occasional sermon, in which the prophet sings both of mercy and judgment to those that did not perceive or understand either: he piped unto them, but they danced not; mourned unto them, but they wept not. Here is, (1.) The mighty fright that Abaz was in upon an attempt of the confederate forces of Syria and Israel against Jerusalem, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) The assurance which God by the prophet sent him for his encouragement, that the attempt should be defeated, and Jerusalem should be preserved, *ver. 3—9.* (3.) The confirmation of this by a sign which God gave to Abaz, when he refused to ask one, referring to Christ and our redemption by him, *ver. 10—16.* (4.) A threatening of the great desolation that God would bring upon Abaz and his kingdom by the Assyrians, notwithstanding their escape of this present storm, because they went on still in their wickedness, *ver. 17—25.* And this is written both for our comfort and for our admonition.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up towards Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. 2. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. 3. Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field: 4. And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah: 5. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, 6. Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: 7. Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. 8. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within three score and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. 9. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

The prophet Isaiah had his commission renewed in the year that king Uzziah died, *chap. vi. 1.* Jotham his son reigned, and reigned well sixteen years; all that time, no doubt, Isaiah prophesied as he was commanded, and yet we have not in this book any of his prophecies dated in the reign of Jotham; but this which is put first in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham. Many excellent useful sermons he preached which were not published and left upon record; for if all that was memorable had been written, the world could not have contained the books, *John xxi. 25.* Perhaps in the reign of Ahaz, a wicked king, he had not opportunity to preach so much at court in Jotham's time, and therefore then he wrote the more for a testimony against them.

Here is, 1. A very formidable design laid against Jerusalem by Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, two neighbouring potentates, who had of late made descent upon Judah severally; at the end of the reign of Jotham, the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin and Pekah, *2 Kings xv. 37.* But now in the second or third year of the reign of Ahaz, encouraged by their former successes, they entered into an alliance against Judah; because Ahaz, though he found the sword over his head, began his reign with idolatry: God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and of the king of Israel, *2 Chron. xxvii. 5.* and a great slaughter they made in his kingdom, *ver. 6, 7.* flushed with this victory, they went up towards Jerusalem, the royal city, to war against it, to besiege it, and make themselves masters of it; but it proved in the issue they could not gain their point. Note, The sin of a land brings foreign invasions upon it, and betrays the most advantageous ports and passes to the enemy. And God sometimes makes one wicked nation a scourge to another; but judgment ordinarily begins at the house of God.

2. The great distress that Ahaz and his court were in when they received advice of this design: *It was told the house of David* that Syria and Ephraim had signed a league against Judah, *ver. 2.* This degenerate royal family is called the house of David, to put us in mind of that article of God's covenant with David, *if his children forsake my law, I will chasten their transgression with the rod; but my loving-kindness will I not utterly take away;* which is remarkably fulfilled in this chapter, *Psal. lxxxix. 30.* News being brought that the two armies of Syria and Israel were joined and had taken the field, both court, city, and country, were in a mighty consternation upon the alarm: the heart of Ahaz was moved with fear, and then no wonder that the heart of the people were so, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind; they were tossed and shaken, and put into a great disorder and confusion, were wavering and uncertain in their counsels, hurried hither and thither, and could not fix in any steady resolution; they yielded to the storm, and gave up all for gone, concluding it in vain to make any resistance. Now that which caused this fright was the sense of guilt, and the weakness of their faith: they had made God their enemy, and knew not how to make him their friend, and therefore their fears tyrannized over them; while those whose consciences are kept void of offence, and whose hearts are fixed trusting in God, need not be afraid of evil tidings: though the earth be removed, yet will not they fear; but the wicked flies at the shaking of a leaf, *Lev. xxvi. 36.*

3. The orders and directions given to Isaiah to go and encourage Ahaz in his distress; not for his own sake, he deserved to hear nothing from God but words of terror, which might add affliction to his grief; but because he was a son of David and king of Judah: God had kindness for him for his father's sake, who must not be forgotten, and for his peoples sake, who must not be abandoned, but would be encouraged if Ahaz were. Observe,

(1.) God appointed the prophet to meet Ahaz, though he did not send to the prophet to speak with him, nor desire him to enquire of the Lord for him, *ver. 3. Go to meet Ahaz.* Note, God is often found of those that seek him not, much more will he be found of those that seek him diligently: he speaks comfort to many who not only are not worthy of it, but do not so much as enquire after it.

(2.) He ordered him to take his little son with him, because he carried a sermon in his name, *Shear-Jashub, a remnant shall return*: the prophets sometimes recorded what they preached in the significant names of their children, as *Hosea i. 4, 6, 9.* therefore Isaiah's children are said to be for signs, *Isa. viii. 18.* This son was so called for the encouragement of those of God's people who were carried captive, assuring them that they should return, at least a remnant of them, which is more than we can pretend to merit; yet at this time God was better than his word; for he not only took care that a remnant should return, but the whole number of those whom the confederate forces of Syria and Israel had taken prisoners, *2 Chron. xxviii. 15.*

(3.) He directed him where he should find Ahaz: he was to meet with him not in the temple, or the synagogue, or royal chapel; but *at the end of the conduit of the upper pool*, where he was probably with many of his servants about him, contriving how to order the water-works, so as to secure them to the city, or deprive the enemy of the benefit of them, *chap. xxii. 9, 11. 2 Chron. xxxii. 8, 4.* or giving some necessary directions for the fortifying of the city as well as they could: and perhaps finding every thing in a very bad posture of defence, the conduit out of repair, as well as other things gone to decay, his fears increased, and he was now in greater perplexity than ever; therefore, *Go, meet him there.* Note, God sometimes sends comforts to his people very seasonably, and what time they are most afraid, encourageth them to trust in him.

(4.) He puts words in his mouth, else the prophet would not have known how to bring a message of good to such an ill man, a sinner in Zion, that ought to be afraid; but God intended it for the support of faithful Israelites.

1. The prophet must rebuke their fears, and advise them by no means to yield to them; but keep their temper, and preserve the possession of their own souls, *ver. 4. Take heed and be quiet.* Note, in order to comfort, there is need of caution: that we may be quiet, it is necessary that we take heed and watch against those things that threaten to disquiet us. Fear not with this amazement, this fear that weakens and bath torment; neither let thy heart be tender, so as to melt and fall within thee; but pluck up thy spirits, have a good heart on it and be courageous; let not fear betray the succours which reason and religion offer for thy support. Note, Those who expect God should help them must help themselves, *Psal. cxvii. 14.*

2. He must teach them to despise their enemies, not in pride, or security, or incognitancy, nothing more dangerous than so to despise an enemy; but in faith and dependence upon God. Ahaz's fear called them two powerful, politic princes, for either of which he was an unequal match; but if united, he durst not look them in the face or make head against them: n, saith the prophet, they are *two tails of smoking firebrands*; they are angry, they are fierce, they are furious, as firebrands, as fireballs, and they make one another worse by being in a confederacy, as sticks of fire put together burn the more violently: but they are only smoking firebrands; and where there is smoke, there is some fire, but it may be not so much as was feared; their threatenings will vanish into smoke, *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a wife*, Jer. xli. 17. and Rezin king of Syria but a smoke; and such are all the enemies of God's church, smoking flax that will soon be quenched. Nay, they are but tails of smoking firebrands, in a manner burnt out already; their force is spent, they have consumed themselves with the heat of their own anger, you may put your foot on them and tread them out. The two kingdoms of Syria and Israel were near expiring. Note, The more we have an eye to God as a consuming fire, the less reason we shall have to fear men, though they are never so furious, nay, we shall be able to despise them as smoking firebrands.

3. He must assure them that the present design of these high allies (so they thought themselves) against Jerusalem, should certainly be defeated and come to nothing, *ver. 5, 6, 7.*

(1.) That very thing which Ahaz thought most formidable, is made the ground of their defeat, and that was the depth of their designs and the height of their hopes: therefore they shall be baffled and sent back with shame, *because they have taken evil counsel against thee*, which is an offence to God, these firebrands are a *smoke in his nose*, *Isa. lxi. 5.* and therefore must be extinguished. (1.) They are very spiteful and malicious, and therefore they shall not prosper: Judah had done them no wrong, they had no pretence to quarrel with Ahaz; but without any reason, *Let us go up against Judah and vex it.* Note, Those that are vexatious cannot expect to be prosperous; that love to do mischief, cannot expect to do well. (2.) They are very secure and confident of success; they will vex Judah by going up against it; yet that is not all, they do not doubt but to make a breach in the wall of Jerusalem, wide enough for them to march their army in at: or they count upon dividing the kingdom into two parts, one for the king of Israel, the other for the king of Syria, who had agreed in one viceroy; a king to be set in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal; some obscure person, uncertain whether a Syrian or an Israelite: so sure were they of gaining their point, that they divided the prey before they had caught it. Note, Those that are most scornful are commonly least successful; for surely God scorneth the scorners.

(2.) God himself gives them his word that the attempt should not take effect, *ver. 7. Thus saith the Lord God, the sovereign Lord of all, who bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought*, *Psal. xxxiii. 10.* He saith, *It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass*: their measures shall all be broken, and they shall not be able to bring to pass their enterprise. Note, What ever stands against God, or thinks to stand without him, cannot stand long. Man purposeth, but God disposeth; and *who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth it not; or countermandeth it?* *Lam. 37.* See *Prov. x. 21.*

4. He must give them a prospect of the destruction of these enemies at least that were now such a terror to them. (1.) They should neither of them enlarge their dominions, or push their conquests any farther. The head city of Syria is Damascus, and the head man of Damascus is Rezin: this he glories in, and this let them be content with, *ver. 8.* The head city of Ephraim hath long been Samaria, and the head man in Samaria is now Pekah the son of Remaliah; each of these shall be made to know their own, their bounds are fixed, and they shall not pass them to make themselves masters of the cities of Judah, much less to make Jerusalem their prey. Note, As God hath appointed men the bounds of their habitation, *Abd. xvii. 20.* so he hath appointed princes the bound of their dominion, within which they ought to confine themselves, and not encroach upon their neighbour's rights. (2.) Ephraim, which perhaps was the more malicious and forward enemy of the two, should shortly be quite rooted out, and should be so far from seizing other people's lands, that they should not be able to hold their own. Interpreters are much at a loss how to compute the

sixty-five years within which *Ephraim shall cease to be a people*; for the captivity of the ten tribes was but eleven years after this: and some make it a mistake of the transcriber, and think it should be read *within six and five years*, just eleven. But it is hard to allow that. Others make it to be sixty-five years from the time that the prophet Amos first foretold the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes: and some late interpreters make it to look as far forward as the last desolation of that country by Esarhaddon, which was about sixty-five years after this; then Ephraim was so broken, that it was no more a people. Now it was the greatest folly in the world for them to be ruining their neighbours, who were themselves marked for ruin, and to near to it. See what a prophet told them at this time, when they were triumphing over Judah, *2 Chron. xxviii. 10. Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?*

5. He must urge them to mix faith with those assurances which he had given them, *ver. 9. If ye will not believe what is said to you, surely ye shall not be established*; your shaken and disordered state shall not be established, your unquiet, unsettled spirit shall not: though the things told you are very encouraging, yet they will not be so to you, unless you believe them and be willing to take God's word. Note, The grace of faith is absolutely necessary to the quieting and composing of the mind in the midst of all the tosses of this present time, *2 Chron. xx. 20.*

10. Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, 11. Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy GOD; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. 12. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. 13. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David? *Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?* 14. ¶ Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. 15. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. 16. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

Here, 1. God by the prophet makes a gracious offer to Ahaz, to confirm the foregoing predictions, and his faith in them by such a sign, or miracle as he should choose, *ver. 10, 11. Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God.* See here the divine faithfulness and veracity: God tells us nothing but what he is able and ready to prove. See his wonderful condescension to the children of men, in that he is so willing to *show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel*, Heb. vi. 17. He considers our frame, and that living in a world of sense we are apt to require sensible proofs, which therefore he has favoured us with in sacramental signs and seals. Ahaz was an ill man, yet God is called the Lord his God, because he was a child of Abraham and David, and of the covenants made with them. See how gracious God is even to the evil and unthankful: he is bid to choose his sign, as Gideon about the fleece, *Judges vi. 37.* let him ask for a sign either in the air, or earth, or water, for God's power is the same in each.

2. Ahaz rudely refuseth this gracious offer, (which is not mannerly towards any superior) kicks at the courtesy, and puts a slight upon it, *ver. 12. I will not ask.* The true reason why he should not ask for a sign was, because having a dependence upon the Assyrians, their forces and their gods for help, he would not thus far be beholden to the God of Israel, or lay himself under obligations to him. He would not ask a sign for the confirming of his faith, because he resolved to persist in his unbelief, and would indulge his doubts and distrusts; yet he pretends a pious reason, *I will not tempt the Lord*; as if it would be a tempting of God to do that which God himself invited and directed him to do. Note, A secret disaffection to God is often disguised with the specious colours of respect to him; and those that are resolved they will not trust God, yet take on them they will not tempt him.

3. The prophet reproves him and his court, him and the house of David, the whole royal family, for their contempt of prophecy, and the little value they had for divine revelation, *ver. 13. Is it a small thing for you to weary men by your oppression and tyranny, with which you make yourself burdensome and odious to all mankind? But will you weary my God also with the affronts you put upon him?* as the unjust judge that neither feared God nor regarded man, *Luke xviii. 1. Ye have wearied the Lord with your words*, *Mal. ii. 17.* Nothing is more grievous to the God of heaven than to be distrusted: *Will ye weary my God?* i. e. Will ye suppose him to be tired and unable to help you, or to be weary of doing you good? Whereas *the youths may faint and be weary*; you may have tired all your friends, but *the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary*, *Isa. xl. 30, 31.* Or thus; in affronting the prophets, you think you put a slight only upon men like yourselves, and consider not that you affront God himself, whose messengers they are, and put a slight upon him who will resent it accordingly. The prophet here calls God his God with a great deal of pleasure; Ahaz would not say, he is my God though the prophet had invited him to say so, *ver. 11. The Lord thy God*; but Isaiah will say, He is mine. Note, Whatever others do, we must avouch the Lord for our's and abide by him.

4. The prophet in God's name gives them a sign; you will not ask a sign, but the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of none effect: *The Lord himself shall give a sign*, *ver. 14.* a double sign:

1. A sign in general of his good will to Israel and to the house of David; you may conclude he hath mercy in store for you, and that you are not forsaken of your God, how great soever your present distress and danger is; for of your nation, of your family the Messiah is to be born, and you cannot be destroyed while that blessing is in you; which shall be introduced, (1.) In a glorious manner; for whereas you have been often told that he shall be born among you, I am now farther to tell you, that he shall be born of a virgin; which will signify both the divine power and the divine purity with which he shall be brought into the world: that he shall be an extraordinary person, for he shall not be born by ordinary generation, and that he shall be a holy thing, nor stained with the common pollutions of the human nature, therefore incontestibly fit to have the throne of his father David given him. Now this, though it was to be accomplished above five hundred years after, yet was a most encouraging sign to the house of David, (and to them under that title this prophecy is directed, *ver. 13.*) and an assurance that God would not cast them off. Ephraim did indeed envy Judah, *Isa. xi. 13.* and sought the ruin of that kingdom, but could not prevail, for the scepter should never depart from Judah till the coming of Shiloh, *Gen. xlix. 10.* Those whom God designs for the great salvation, may take that for a sign to them, that they shall not be swallowed

swallowed up by any trouble they may meet with in the way. (2.) The Messiah shall be introduced on a glorious errand, wrapped up in his glorious name: they shall call his name *Immanuel*, i. e. God with us, God in our nature, God at peace with us. in covenant with us. This was fulfilled in their calling him Jesus, a Saviour. *Matt. i. 21, 22, 23.* for if he had not been Immanuel, *God with us*, he could not have been Jesus a Saviour. Now this was a further sign of God's favour to the house of David and the tribe of Judah; for he that intended to work this great salvation among them, no doubt would work out for them all those other salvations which were to be the types and figures of this, and as it were preludes to this. Here is a sign for you, not in the depth, or in the height, but in the prophecy, in the promise, in the covenant made with David, which you are no strangers to, the promised seed shall be Immanuel, *God with us*, let that word comfort you, *Isa. viii. 10. God is with us*, and *ver. 8.* that your land is Immanuel's land. Let not the heart of the house of David be moved thus, *ver. 2.* nor let Judah fear the setting up of the son of Tabeal, *ver. 6.* for nothing can cut off the entail on the son of David that shall be Immanuel. Note, The strongest consolations in time of trouble are those which are borrowed from Christ, our relation to him, our interest in him, and our expectations of him and from him.

Of this child it is further foretold, *ver. 15.* that though he shall not be born like other children, but of a virgin, yet he shall be really and truly man, and shall be nursed and brought up like other children; *butter and honey shall he eat*, as other children do, particularly the children of that land which *flowed with milk and honey*. Though he be conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet he shall not therefore be fed with angels' food; but as it becomes him, shall be in all things made like unto his brethren, *Heb. ii. 17.* Nor shall he, though born thus by extraordinary generation, be a man immediately; but as other children shall advance gradually through the several states of infancy, childhood, and youth, to that of manhood, and growing in wisdom and stature, shall at length wax strong in spirit, and come to that maturity as to know how to *refuse the evil and choose the good*. See *Luke ii. 40—52.* Note, Children are fed when they are little, that they may be taught and instructed when they are grown up: they have their maintenance in order to their education.

2. Here is another sign in particular of the speedy destruction of these potent princes that were now a terror to Judah, *ver. 16.* Before this child, so it should be read; this child I have now in my arms, he means not Immanuel, but Shear-jashub his own son, whom he was ordered to take with him for a sign, *ver. 3.* before this child shall know how to *refuse the evil and choose the good*, (and those who saw what his present stature and forwardness was, would easily conjecture how long that would be) before this child will be three or four years older, *the land that thou abhorrest*, i. e. these confederate forces of Israelites and Syrians whom thou hast such an enmity to and standest in such dread of, *shall be forsaken of both their kings*, both Pekah and Rezin; who were in so close an alliance, that they seemed as if they were the kings of but one kingdom. This was fully accomplished, for within two or three years after this, Hosea conspired against Pekah and slew him, *2 Kings xv. 30.* and before that the king of Assyria took Damascus and slew Rezin, *2 Kings xvi. 9.* Nay, there was a present event which happened immediately, and which this child carried the prediction of in his name, which was a pledge and earnest of this further event: Shear-jashub signifies the remnant shall return, which doubtless points at the wonderful return of those two hundred thousand captives which Pekah and Rezin had carried away; who were brought back not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Read the story, *2 Chron. xxviii. 8—15.* The prophetic naming of this child having thus had its accomplishment, no doubt this which was further added concerning him should have its accomplishment likewise, that Syria and Israel should be deprived of both their kings. One mercy from God encourageth us to hope for another, if it engageth us to prepare for another.

17. ¶ The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria. 18. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost parts of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. 19. And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes. 20. In the same day shall the LORD shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard. 21. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep: 22. And it shall come to pass for the abundance of milk that they shall give, he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land. 23. And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall even be for briers and thorns. 24. With arrows and with bows shall men come thither; because all the land shall become briers and thorns. 25. And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the fending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

After the comfortable promises made to Ahaz, as a branch of the house of David, here follow terrible threatenings, against him as a degenerate branch of that house, for though the loving-kindness of God shall not be utterly taken away, for the sake of David and the covenant made with him; yet his iniquity shall be chastened with the rod, and his sin with stripes. Let those that will not mix faith with the promises of God expect to hear the alarms of his threatenings.

1. The judgment threatened is very great, *ver. 17.* It is very great, for it is general: it shall be brought upon the prince himself, as high as he is he shall not be out of the reach of it, and upon the people, the whole body of the nation, and upon the royal family, upon all thy father's house; it shall be a judgment entailed on posterity, and shall go along with the royal blood. It is very great, for it shall be unprecedented, *days that have not come*; so dark, so gloomy, so melancholy, as never were the like since

the revolt of the ten tribes, when Ephraim departed from Judah, which was indeed a sad time to the house of David. Note, The longer men continue in sin, the fierer punishments they have reason to expect: it is the Lord that will bring these days upon them, for our times are in his hands: and who can resist or escape the judgments he brings.

2. The enemy that should be employed as the instrument of this judgment is the king of Assyria: Ahaz reposed a mighty confidence in that prince for help, against the confederate powers of Israel and Syria, and minded the less what God said to him by his prophet for his encouragement, because he built much upon his interest in the king of Assyria, and had sneakingly promised to be his servant if he would send him some succours; and made him a present of gold and silver, for which he drained the treasures both of church and state, *2 Kings xvi. 7, 8.* Now God threatens that the king of Assyria, whom he made his stay instead of God, should become a scourge to him. He was so presently, for when he came to him he distressed him, but strengthened him not: the reed not only broke under him, but run into his hand and pierced it, *2 Chron. xxviii. 20.* and from thenceforward the kings of Assyria were long-grieving thorns to Judah, and gave them a great deal of trouble. Note, The creature that we make our hope, commonly proves our hurt: the king of Assyria not long after this made himself master of the ten tribes, carried them captive, and laid their country waste, so as fully to answer this prediction here; and perhaps it may refer to that, as an explication of *ver. 8.* where it is foretold, that Ephraim shall be broken, that it shall not be a people: and it is easy to suppose that the prophet, at *ver. 17.* turns his speech to the king of Israel, denouncing God's judgments against him for invading Judah. But the expositors universally understand it of Ahaz and his kingdom. Now observe.

1. Summons given to the invaders, *ver. 18.* The Lord shall whistle for the fly and the bee; see *chap. v. 26.* Enemies that seem as contemptible as a fly or a bee, and as easily crushed; yet when God pleaseth, they shall do his work as effectually as lions and young lions. Though they are as far distant from one another as the rivers of Egypt and the land of Assyria, yet they shall punctually meet to join in this work when God commands their attendance; for when God hath work to do, he will not be to seek for instruments to do it with.

2. Possession taken by them, *ver. 19.* It should seem as if the country were in no condition to make resistance, they had no difficulties in forcing their way; but come and rest all of them in the desolate valleys, which the inhabitants had deserted upon the first alarm, and left them a cheap and easy prey to the invaders: they shall come and rest in the low grounds like swarms of flies and bees, and shall render themselves impregnable by taking shelter in the holes of the rocks, as bees often do; and shew themselves formidable by appearing openly upon all thorns and all bushes; so generally shall the land be overspread with them. These bees shall knit upon the thorns and bushes, and there rest undisturbed.

3. Great desolations made, and the country generally depopulated, *ver. 20.* The Lord shall shave the hair of the head, and beard, and feet; i. e. shall sweep all away, as the leper when he was cleansed shaved off all his hair, *Lev. xiv. 8, 9.* This is done with a razor that is hired; which God has hired, as if he had none of his own; but what he hires, and whom he employs in any service for him, he will pay: see *Ezek. xxix. 18, 19.* Or which Ahaz has hired for his assistance. God will make that to be an instrument of his destruction which he hired into his service. Note, Many are beaten with that arm of flesh which they trusted to rather than to the arm of the Lord, and which they were at a great expence upon; when by faith and prayer they might have found cheap and easy succour in God.

4. The consequences of this general depopulation.

1. The flocks of cattle shall be all destroyed; so that a man that had herds and flocks in abundance shall be stripped of them all by the enemy, and shall with much ado save for his own use a young cow and two sheep; a poor flock, *ver. 21.* yet he shall think himself happy in having any left.

2. The few cattle that are left shall have such a large compass of ground to feed in, that they shall give abundance of milk, and very good milk; such as shall produce butter enough, *ver. 22.* There shall also be such want of men, that the milk of one cow and two sheep shall serve a whole family which used to keep abundance of servants and consume a great deal, but is now reduced.

3. The breed of cattle shall be destroyed; so that they who used to eat flesh, as the Jews commonly did, shall be necessitated to confine themselves to butter and honey: for there shall be no flesh for them; and the country shall be so depopulated, that there shall be butter and honey enough for the few that are left in it.

4. Good land that used to be set well shall be all overrun with briers and thorns, *ver. 23.* where there used to be a thousand vines planted, for which the tenants used to pay a thousand shekels or pieces of silver yearly rent, there shall be nothing now but briers and thorns, no prophet either for landlord or tenant; all been laid waste by the army of the invaders. Note, God can soon turn a fruitful land into barrenness; and it is just with him to turn vines into briers, if we, instead of bringing forth grapes to him, bring forth wild grapes, *chap. v. 2.*

5. The instruments of husbandry shall be turned into instruments of war, *ver. 24.* The whole land being become briers and thorns, the grounds that men used to come to with sickles and pruning-hooks to gather in the fruits, they shall now come to with arrows and bows, either to hunt for wild beasts in the thickets, or to defend themselves from the rapparees that lurk in the bushes seeking for prey, or to kill the serpents and venomous beasts that are hid there. This speaks a very sad change of the face of that pleasant land: but what melancholy change is there which sin will not make with a people?

6. There where briers and thorns were wont to be of use, and to do good service, even in the hedges, for the defence of the inclosed grounds, they shall be plucked up and all laid in common. There shall be briers and thorns in abundance, there where they should not be, but none where they should be, *ver. 25.* The hills that shall be digged with the mattock; for special use, from which the cattle used to be kept off with the fear of briers and thorns, shall now be thrown open: the hedges broken down for the boar out of the wood to waste it, *Psal. lxxx. 12, 13.* It shall be left at large for oxen to run in, and lesser cattle.

See the effects of sin and the curse; it has made the earth a forest of thorns and thistles, further than it is forced into some order by the constant care and labour of man: and see what folly it is to set our hearts upon possessions of lands, be they never so fruitful, never so pleasant; when if they lie never so little neglected and uncultivated, or if they be abused by a wasteful careless heir or tenant, or the country laid waste by war, they will soon become frightful deserts. Heaven is a paradise not subject to such changes.

C H A P. VIII.

This chapter, and the four next that follow it, to *chap. xiii.* are all one continued discourse or sermon; the scope of which is to shew the great destruction

destruction that should now shortly be brought upon the kingdom of Israel, and the great disturbance that should be given to the kingdom of Judah by the king of Assyria, and that both were for their sins; but rich provision is made of comfort for those that feared God in those dark times, referring specially to the days of the Messiah. In this chapter we have, (1.) A prophecy of the destruction of the confederate kingdoms of Syria and Israel by the king of Assyria, ver. 1—4. (2.) Of the desolations that should be made by that proud victorious prince, in the land of Israel and Judah, ver. 5—8. (3.) Great encouragement given to the people of God in the midst of those distractions: they are assured, (1.) That the enemies shall not gain their point against them, ver. 9, 10. (2.) That if they kept up the fear of God, and kept down the fear of man, they should find God their refuge, ver. 1—14. And while others stumbled, and fell into despair they should be enabled to wait on God, and should see themselves reserved for better times, ver. 15—18. Lastly, he gives a necessary caution to all, at their peril, not to consult with familiar spirits, for they would thereby throw them into despair, but to keep close to the word of God, ver. 19—22. And these counsels, and these comforts, will be of use to us in time of trouble.

1. **M**OREOVER the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen, concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 2. And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. 3. And I went unto the prophetess and she conceived and bare a son; then said the LORD to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 4. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus, and the spoils of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria. 5. ¶ The LORD spake also unto me again, saying, 6. Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son: 7. Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: 8. And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

In these verses we have a prophecy of the successes of the king of Assyria against Damascus, Samaria, and Judah; that the two former should be laid waste by him, and the last greatly frightened. Here is,

1. Orders given to the prophet to write this prophecy, and publish it to be seen and read of all men, and to leave it upon record, that when the thing came to pass, they might know that God had sent him, for that was one end of prophecy, *John* xiv. 29. He must take a great roll which would contain those five chapters, fairly written in words at length: and he must write in it all that he had foretold concerning the king of Assyria's invading the country: he must write it with a man's pen, in the usual way and stile of writing, so as that it might be legible and intelligible to all: See *Hab.* ii. 2. *Write the vision, and make it plain.* They that speak and write of the things of God, should avoid obscurity, and study to speak and write so as to be understood, *1 Cor.* xiv. 19. They that write for men, should write with a man's pen, and not covet the pen or tongue of angels. And forasmuch as it is usual to put some short, but significant comprehensive title before books that are published, the prophet is directed to call his book Maher-shalal-hash-baz; *Make speed to the spoil, hasten to the prey;* intimating, that the Assyrian army should come upon them with great speed, and make great spoil; by this title the substance and meaning of the book would be enquired after by those that heard of it, and remembered by those that had read it or heard it read. It is sometimes a good help to memory to put much matter in a few words, which will serve as handles by which we take hold of more.

2. The care of this prophet to get this record well attested, *ver.* 2. *I took unto me faithful witnesses to record,* wrote the prophecy in their sight and presence, and made them subscribe their names to it, that they might be ready, if afterwards there should be occasion, to make oath of it, that the prophet had foretold the descent which the Assyrians made upon that country so long before; he names his witnesses for the greater certainty, that they might be appealed to by any: They were two in number; for out of the mouth of two witnesses shall every word be established: One was, Uriah the priest: he is mentioned in the story of Ahaz, but for none of his good deeds, for he honoured Ahaz with an idolatrous altar, *2 Kings* xvi. 10, 11. however, at this time no exception lay against him, but that he was a faithful witness. See what full satisfaction the prophets took care to give to all persons concerned, of the sincerity of their intentions, that we might know with a full assurance the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, and that we have not followed cunningly devised fables.

3. The making of the title of his book the name of his child, that it might be the more taken notice of, and the more effectually perpetuated, *ver.* 3. His wife (because the wife of a prophet) is called the prophetess, she conceived and bare a son, another son, who must carry a sermon in his name, as the former had done, *chap.* vii. 2, but with this difference, that spoke mercy, Shear-jashub, the remnant shall return: but that being slighted, this speaks judgment, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, in making speed to the spoil he shall hasten, as has happened to the prey. The prophecy is doubled, even in this one name, for the thing was certain: *I will hasten my word,* *Jer.* i. 12. Every time the child was called by his name or any part of it, it would serve as a memorandum of the judgments approaching. Note, It is good for us often to put ourselves in mind of the charges and troubles we are liable to in this world, and which perhaps are at the door. When we look with pleasure on our children, it should be with the alloy of this thought, we know not what they are yet reserved for.

4. The prophecy itself, which explains this mystical name:

1. That Syria and Israel, who were now in confederacy against Judah, should in a very little time become an easy prey to the king of Assyria and his victorious army, *ver.* 4. *Before the child,* now newly born and named, shall have knowledge to cry my father and my mother, (which are usually some of the first things that children know; and some of the first words that children speak) i. e. in about a year or two, the riches of Damascus and the spoil

of Samaria, those cities that were now to secure themselves, and so formidable to their neighbours, shall be taken away before the king of Assyria, who shall plunder both city and country, and send the best effects of both into his own land, to enrich that, and as trophies of his victory. Note, Those that spoil others must expect to be themselves spoiled, *Isa.* xxxiii. 1. for the Lord is righteous, and those that are troublesome shall be troubled.

2. That forasmuch as they were many in Judah that were secretly in the interests of Syria and Israel, and were disaffected to the house of David, God would chastise them also by the king of Assyria, who should create a great deal of vexation to Judah, as was foretold, *chap.* vii. 17.

Observe, 1. What was the sin of the discontented party in Judah, *ver.* 6. *This people,* whom the prophet here speaks to, *refuse the waters of Shiloah that go softly;* despise their own country and the government of it, and love to run it down, because it doth not make so great a figure, and so great a noise in the world, as some other kings and kingdoms do. They refuse the comforts which God's prophets offer them from the word of God, and speak to them in a still small voice, and make nothing of them; but they rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son, who were the enemies of their country, and were now actually invading it; they cried them up as brave men, magnified their policies and strength, applauded their conduct, were well-pleased with their successes, and were hearty well-wishers to their designs, and resolved to desert and go over to them. Such vipers doth many a state foster in its bosom, that eat its bread, and yet adhere to its enemies, and are ready to quit its interests, if they but seem to totter.

2. The judgment which God would bring upon them for this sin. The same king of Assyria, that should lay Ephraim and Syria waste, should be a scourge and terror to those of their party in Judah, *ver.* 7, 8. Because they refuse the waters of Shiloah, and will not accommodate themselves to the government God hath set over them, but are uneasy under it, therefore the Lord brings upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, the river Euphrates; they slighted the land of Judah, because it had no river to boast of comparable to that; the river at Jerusalem was a very inconsiderable one: Well, saith God, if you be such admirers of Euphrates, you shall have enough of it, the king of Assyria, whose country lies upon that river, shall come with his glory, i. e. with his great army, which you cry up as his glory, despising your own king, because he cannot bring such an army as that into the field: God shall bring that army upon you. If we value men, if we over-value them for their worldly wealth and power, it is just with God to make them by that a scourge to us. It is used as an argument against magnifying rich men, that rich men oppress us, *James* ii. 3—6. Let us be best pleased with the waters of Shiloah that go softly, for rapid streams are dangerous. It is threatened, that the Assyrian army should break in upon them like a deluge, or inundation of waters bearing down all before it, shall come up over all his channels, and overflow all his banks, it would be to no purpose to oppose them, or give them a stand; Sennacherib and his army should pass through Judah, and meet with so little resistance, that it shall look more like a march through the country than a descent upon it: he shall reach even to the neck, i. e. he shall advance so far as to lay siege to Jerusalem the head of the kingdom, and nothing but that shall keep out of his hands; for that was the holy city. Note, In the greatest deluge of trouble God can and will keep the head of his people above water, and so preserve their comforts and spiritual lives; the waters that come into their souls may reach to the neck, (*Psal.* lxxix. 1.) but there shall their proud waves be staid. And here is another comfortable intimation, that though the stretching out of the wings of the Assyrian, that bird of prey, though the right and best wing of his army should fill the breadth of the land of Judah, yet still it was Immanuel's land: it is thy land, O Immanuel; it was to be Christ's land, for there he was to be born, and live, and preach, and work miracles: He was Zion's King, and therefore had a peculiar interest in, and concern for that land. Note, The lands that Immanuel owns for his, as he doth all those lands that own him, though they may be deluged, shall not be destroyed, for when the enemy shall come in like a flood, Immanuel shall secure his own, and shall lift up a standard against him, *Isa.* lix. 19.

9. ¶ Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. 10. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought: speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us. 11. For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, 12. Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. 13. Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin, and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

The prophet here returns to speak of the present distress that Ahaz, and his court and kingdom were in, upon account of the threatening confederacy of the ten tribes, and the Syrians against them: And in these verses.

1. He triumphs over the invading enemies, and in effect sets them at defiance, and bids them to do their worst, *ver.* 9, 10. *Ye people, ye of far countries,* give ear to what the prophet saith to you in God's name.

1. We doubt not but you will now make your utmost efforts against Judah and Jerusalem; you associate yourselves in a strict alliance, you gird yourselves, and again you gird yourselves, you prepare for action, you address yourselves to it with resolution, you gird on your swords, you gird up your loins, you animate and encourage yourselves and one another with all the considerations you can think of; you take counsel together, call councils of war, and all heads are at work, about the proper methods for making yourselves masters of the land of Judah; you speak the word, you come to resolutions concerning it, and are not always deliberating, you determine what to do, and are very confident of the success of it, that the matter will be accomplished with a word's speaking. Note, It is with a great deal of policy, resolution, and assurance, that the church's enemies carry on their designs against it; and abundance of pains they take, to roll a stone that will certainly return upon them.

2. This is to let you know, that all your efforts will be ineffectual, you cannot

cannot, you shall not gain your point, nor carry the day; *you shall be broken in pieces*; though you associate yourselves, though you gird yourselves, though you proceed with all the policy and precaution imaginable, yet I tell you again and again, all your projects shall be baffled. *ye shall be broken in pieces*; nay, not only your attempts shall be ruined, but your attempts shall be your ruin; you shall be broken by those designs you have formed against Jerusalem: *your counsels shall come to nought*; for there is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord; your resolves will not be put in execution, they shall not stand, you speak the word, but *who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth it not?* What sets up itself against God, and his cause, and counsel, cannot stand, but must inevitably fall. For God is with us; this refers to the name of Immanuel, *God with us*: The Messiah is to be born among us, and a people designed for such an honour, cannot be given up to utter ruin; we have now the special presence of God with us in his temple, his oracles, his promises, and these are our defence. God is with us, *i. e.* he is on our side, to take our part, and fight for us; and *if God be for us, who can be against us?* Thus doth the daughter of Zion despise them.

2. He comforts and encourageth the people of God with the same comforts and encouragements which he himself had received: the attempt made upon them was very formidable, the house of David, the court and royal family were at their wits end, *chap. vii. 2.* and then no marvel if the people were in a consternation. Now, 1. The prophet tells us how he was himself taught of God, not to give way to such amazing fears as the people were disturbed with, not to run into the same measures with them, *ver. 11.* *The Lord spoke to me with a strong hand, not to walk in the way of this people*; not to say as they say, nor do as they do, nor to entertain the same frightful apprehensions of things, nor to approve of their projects of making peace upon any terms, or calling in the help of the Assyrians; God instructed the prophet not to go down the stream. Note, 1. There is a proneness in the best of men to be frightened at threatening clouds, especially when fears are epidemical: We are all too apt to walk in the way of the people we live among, though it be not a good way. 2. Those whom God loves and owns, he will instruct and enable to swim against the stream of common corruptions, particularly of common fears: He will find ways to teach his own people not to walk in the way of other people, but in a sober singularity. 3. Corruption is sometimes so active in the hearts even of good men, that they have need to be taught their duty with a strong hand, and it is God's prerogative to teach so, for he only can give an understanding, and empower the contradiction of unbelief and prejudice: He can teach the heart, and herein none teacheth like him. 4. Those that are to teach others, have need to be themselves well instructed in their duty, and then they teach most powerfully, when they teach experimentally; the word that comes from the heart is most likely to reach the heart; and what we are ourselves by the grace of God instructed in, we should, as we are able, teach others also.

Now what is it that he saith to God's people?

(1.) He cautions them against a sinful fear, *ver. 12.* It seems it was the way of this people at this time, and fear is catching; he whose heart fails him, makes his brethren's heart to fail like his heart, *Jer. xx. 8.* therefore *say ye not, A confederacy to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy*: That is, (1.) Be not associated with them in the confederacies they are projecting and forecasting for: Do not join with those that for the securing of themselves are for making a league with the Assyrians, through unbelief and distrust of God and their cause: Do not come into any such confederacy. Note, It concerns us in time of trouble to watch against all such fears, as put us upon taking any indirect courses for our own security. (2.) Be not afraid of the confederacies they frighten themselves and one another with: Do not amuse yourselves with the apprehension of a confederacy upon every thing that stirs, nor when any little thing is amiss cry out presently, there is a plot, a plot: when they talk what dismal news there is, *Syria is joined with Ephraim*, what will become of us? must we fight? or must we flee? or must we yield? do not you fear their fear; *Be not afraid of the signs of heaven*, as the heathen are, *Jer. x. 2.* Be not afraid of evil tidings on earth, but let your hearts be fixed: Fear not that which they fear, nor be afraid as they are; Be not put into such a fright as causeth trembling and shaking; so the word signifies. Note, when the church's enemies have sinful confederacies on foot, the church's friends should watch against the sinful fears of those confederacies.

(2.) He adviseth them to a gracious, religious fear; but *sanctify the Lord of hosts himself*, *ver. 13.* Note, The believing fear of God is a special preservative against the disquieting fear of man, see *1 Pet. iii. 14, 15.* where this is quoted and applied to suffering Christians. (1.) We must look upon God as the Lord of hosts, that has all power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck. (2.) We must sanctify him accordingly, *i. e.* give him the glory due to that name, and carry it towards him as those that believe him to be a holy God. (3.) We must make him our fear, the object of our fear, and make him our dread, keep up a reverence of his providence, and stand in awe of his sovereignty: be afraid of his displeasure, and silently acquiesce in all his dispensals. Were we but duly affected with the greatness and glory of God, we should see the pomp of our enemies eclipsed and clouded, and all their power restrained and under check, see *Neh. iv. 14.* They that are afraid of the reproach of men, forget the Lord their maker, *Isa. li. 12, 13.* compare *Luke xii. 4, 5.*

(3.) He assures them of a holy security and serenity of mind in so doing, *ver. 14.* *He shall be for a sanctuary*; make him your fear, and you shall find him your hope, your help, your defence, and your mighty deliverer: He will sanctify and preserve you. He will be for a sanctuary: (1.) To make you holy; he will be your sanctification; for some read it. If we sanctify God by our praises, he will sanctify us by his grace. (2.) To make you easy; he will be your sanctuary, to which you may flee for safety, and where you are privileged from all the arrests of fear; you shall find an inviolable refuge and security in him, and see yourselves out of the reach of danger. They that truly fear God, shall not need to fear any evil.

(3.) He threatens the ruin of the ungodly and unbelieving, both in Judah and Israel: They have no part nor lot in the foregoing comforts; that God who will be a sanctuary to those who trust in him, will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to those who *leave these waters of Shiloah, and rejoice in Razin and Remaliah's son*, *ver. 6.* who make the creature their fear and their hope, *ver. 14, 15.* The prophet foresees that the greatest part of both the houses of Israel, would not sanctify the Lord of hosts, and to them he would be for a gin and a snare, *i. e.* he would be a terror to them, as he would be a support and stay to those that trusted in him; Instead of profiting by the word of God, they should be offended at it, and the providences of God, instead of leading them to him, would drive them from him: What was a favour of life unto life to others, would be a favour of death unto death to them. So that *many among them shall stumble and fall*, they shall fall both into sin and into ruin; they shall fall by the sword, shall be taken prisoners, and go into captivity. Note, If the things of God be an offence to us, they will be an undoing to us. Some apply this to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected Christ, and to whom he became a stone of stumbling, for the apostle quotes this scripture with application to all those who persisted in their unbelief of the gospel of Christ, *1 Pet. ii.*

8. to them he is a rock of offence, because long disobedient to the word, they stumble at it.

16. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. 17. And I will wait upon the LORD that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. 18. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me, are for signs, and for wonders in Israel; from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. 19. ¶ And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people, seek unto their God? for the living, to the dead? 20. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. 21. And they shall pass through it, hardly beset and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry: they shall fret themselves, and curse their king, and their God, and look upward. 22. And they shall look unto the earth: and behold, trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.

In these verses we have,

1. The unspeakable privilege which the people of God enjoy, in having the oracles of God committed over to them, and being intrusted with the sacred writings; that they may sanctify the Lord of hosts, may make them their fear, and find him their sanctuary, *bind up the testimony*, *ver. 16.* Note, It is a great instance of God's care of his church and love to it, that he hath lodged in it the invaluable treasure of divine revelation. (1.) It is a testimony and a law; not only this prophecy is so, which must therefore be preserved safe for the comforts of God's people in the approaching times of trouble and distress, but the whole word of God is so; God hath attested it, and he hath enjoined it. As a testimony it directs our faith; as a law, it directs our practice; and we ought both to subscribe to the truths of it, and submit to the precepts of it. (2.) This testimony and law are bound up and sealed, for we are not to add to them, or diminish from them; they are a letter from God to man, folded up and sealed; a proclamation under the broad-seal. The binding up and sealing of the Old Testament, signified that the full explanation of many of the prophecies of it was reserved for the New Testament times, *Dan. xii. 4.* *Seal the book till the time of the end*; but what was then bound up and sealed is now opened and unsealed, and *revel'd unto habes*, *Matt. xi. 25.* Yet with reference to the other world and the future state, still the testimony is bound up and sealed, for we know but in part, and prophecy but in part. (3.) They are lodged as a sacred depositum in the hands of the disciples, of the children of the prophets and the covenant, *Acts iii. 25.* This is the good thing which is committed to them, and which they are charged with the custody of, *2 Tim. i. 13, 14.* Those that had prophets for their tutors, must still keep close to the written word.

2. The good use which we ought to make of this privilege. And this we are taught,

2. By the prophet's own practice and resolutions, *ver. 17, 18.* He embraced the law and the testimony, and he had the comfort of it in the midst of the many discouragements he met with. Note, Those ministers can best recommend the word of God to others, that have themselves found the satisfaction of relying upon it. Observe,

(1.) The discouragements which the prophet laboured under; he instanteth in two: (1.) The frowns of God, not so much upon himself, but upon his people, whose interests lay very near his heart; he *hideth his face from the house of Jacob*, and seems at present to neglect them, and lay them under the tokens of his displeasure. The prophet was himself employed in revealing God's wrath against them, and yet grieved thus for it, as one that did not desire the worst day. If the house of Jacob forsake the god of Jacob, let it not be thought strange, that he hide his face from them. (2.) The contempt and reproaches of men, not only upon himself but upon his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed; *I and the children which the Lord hath given me, are for signs and wonders*; we are gazed at as monsters or outlandish people, pointed at as we go along the streets. Probable the prophetic names that were given his children, were ridiculed and bantered by the prophane scoffers of the town: *I am as a wonder unto many*, *Psal. lxxi. 7.* God's people are the world's wonder, *Zech. iii. 8.* for their singularity, and because they run not with them to the same excess of riot, *1 Pet. iv. 4.* The prophet was herein a type of Christ; for this is quoted *Heb. ii. 13.* to prove that believers are Christ's children: *Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.* Parents must look upon their children as God's gifts, his gracious gifts, Jacob did so, *Gen. xxxiii. 5.* Ministers must look upon their converts as their children, and be tender of them accordingly, *1 Thess. ii. 7.* and as the children which God hath given them; for whatever good we are instrumental of to others, it is owing to the grace of God. Christ looks upon believers as his children, which the Father gave him, *John xvii. 6.* And both he and they are for signs and for wonders spoken against, *Luke ii. 34.* every where spoken against, *Acts xxviii. 22.*

(2.) The encouragement he took in reference to these discouragements: (1.) He saw the hand of God in all that which was discouraging to him, and kept his eye upon that. Whatever trouble the house of Jacob was in, it comes from God's hiding his face; nay, whatever contempt was put upon him or his friends, it is from the Lord of hosts: he hath bidden Shimei curse David, *2 Sam. xiii. 11.* (2.) He saw God dwelling in mount Zion, manifesting himself to his people, and ready to hear their prayers and receive their homage. Though for the present he hide his face from the house of Jacob, yet they knew where to find him, and recover the sight of him, he dwells in Mount Zion. (3.) He therefore resolved to wait upon the Lord, and to look for him; to attend his motions, even while he hides his face, and to expect with an humble assurance his returns in a way of mercy. Those that wait upon God by faith and prayer, may look for him with hope and joy. When we have not sensible comforts, we must still keep up our observance of God and obedience to him, and then wait a while, *at evening time it shall be light.*

2. By the counsel and advice which he gives to his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed, to whom were committed the lively oracles.

1. He supposeth they would be tempted in the day of their distress to consult them that had familiar spirits, that deal with the devil, asked his advice, and desired to be informed by him concerning things to come, that they might take their measures accordingly. Thus Saul, when

he was in trials, made his application to the witch of Endor, 1 Sam. xxviii. 7—13. and Abaziah to the God of Ekron, 2 Kings i. 5. These conjurers had odd fantastic gestures and tones, they peeped and muttered, they rustled their heads, that they could neither see nor be seen plainly, but peeped and were peeped at: or both the words here used may refer to their voice and manner of speaking: they delivered what they had to say, with a low, hollow, broken, scarce articulate; and sometimes in a pulsing or mournful tone, like a crane, or a swallow, or a dove, *Iza. xxxviii. 14.* They spoke not with that boldness and plainness which the prophets of the Lord spoke with, but as those that desired to amuse people rather than to instruct them; yet there were those, who were so wretchedly sottish as to seek to them, and to court others to do so, even the phrophet's hearers, who knew better things, whom therefore the prophet warns not to say a confederacy with such. There were express laws against this wickedness, *Lev. xix. 31.—xx. 27.* and yet it was found in Israel, is found even in Christian nations; but let all that have any sense of religion shew it, by starting at the thought of it; *Get thee behind me, Satan.* Dread the use of spells and charms, and consulting those that by hidden arts pretend to tell fortunes, cure diseases, or discover things lost; for this is heinous crime, and in effect denies the God that is above.

2. He furnisheth them with an answer to this temptation, puts words into their mouths; if any go about thus to insnare you, give them this reply; *Should not a people seek to their God? What? for the living to the dead?* (1.) Tell them it is a principle of religion, that a people ought to seek unto their God; now Jehovah is our God, and therefore to him we ought to seek, and to consult with him, and not with them that have familiar spirits: *All people will that walk in the name of their God, Mic. iv. 5.* They that made the hosts of heaven their gods, *fought unto them, Jer. viii. 2.* Should not a people under guilt, and in trouble, seek to their God for pardon and peace? Should not a people in doubt, in want, and in danger, seek to their God for direction, supply and protection? Since the Lord is our God and we are his people, it is certainly our duty to seek him. (2.) Tell them it is an instance of the greatest folly in the world, to seek for living men to dead idols. What can be more absurd, than to seek to lifeless images, for life and living comforts? Or to expect that our friends that are dead, when we defy them and pray to them, should do that for us which our living friends cannot do; *the dead knowing not any thing, nor is there with them any device or working, Eccles. ix. 5—10.* It is folly therefore for the living to make their court to them, with any expectation of relief from them. Necromancers consulted the dead, as the witch of Endor, and so proclaimed their own folly; we must live by the living, and not by the dead; what life or light can we look for from them that have no light or life themselves?

3. He directs them to consult with the oracles of God; if the prophets that were among them did not speak directly to every case, yet they had the written word, and to that they must have recourse. Note, Those will never be drawn to consult wizards that know how to make a good use of their Bibles. Would we know how we may seek to our God, and come to the knowledge of his mind, to the law and to the testimony; there you will see what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Make God's statutes your counsellors, and you will be counselled right.

Observe, (1.) What use we must make of the law and the testimony, we must speak according to that word, *i. e.* we must make this our standard, conform to it, and take advice from it; make our appeals to it, and in every thing be overruled and determined by it; consent to those wholesome healing words, *2 Tim. vi. 3.* and speak of the things of God in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. It is not enough to say nothing against it, but we must speak according to it.

(2.) Why we must make this use of the law and the testimony; because we shall be convicted of the greatest folly imaginable if we do not. They that concur not with the word of God, it is a sign there is no light, no morning light (so is the word is) in them; they have no right sense of things; they do not understand themselves, nor the difference between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Note, Those that reject divine revelation, have not so much as human understanding; nor do they rightly admit the oracles of reason, who will not admit the oracles of God. Some read it as a threatening; if they speak not according to this word there shall be no light to them, no good, no comfort or relief; but they shall be driven to darkness and despair, as it follows here, *ver. 21, 22.* What light had Saul when he consulted the witch; *1 Sam. xxviii. 18—20.* or what light can they expect that turn away from the Father of lights?

4. He reads the doom of those that seek to familiar spirits, and regard not God's law and testimony; there shall not only be no light to them, no comfort or prosperity; but they may expect all horror and misery, *ver. 21, 22.* (1.) The trouble they feared shall come upon them; they shall pass through the land, or pass to and fro in the land, unfixed, unsettled, and driven from place to place by the threatening power of an invading enemy; they shall be hardly belied whether to go for the necessary supports of life; either because the country would be so impoverished, that there would be nothing to be had, or at least themselves and their friends so impoverished that there would be nothing to be had for them: So that they who used to feed to the full shall be hungry. Note, Those that go away from God, go out of the way of all good. (2.) They shall be very uneasy to themselves, by their discontent and impatience under their trouble: A good man may be in want, but then he quiets himself, and strives to make himself easy; but these people when they shall be hungry shall fret themselves, and when they have nothing to feed on, their vexation shall prey upon their own spirits: for fretfulness is a sin that is its own punishment. (4.) They shall be very provoking to all about them, nay, to all above them; when they find all their measures broke, and themselves at their wits end, they will forget all the rules of duty and decency, and will treasonably curse their king, and blasphemously curse their God; and this more than in their thought, and in their bed-chamber, *Eccles. x. 20.* They begin with cursing their king, for managing the public affairs no better, as if the fault were his, when the best and wisest kings cannot secure success; but when they have broke the bounds of their allegiance, no marvel if those of their religion do not hold them long; they next curse their God, curse him and die; they quarrel with his providence, and reproach that, as if he had done them wrong. *The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord, Prov. xix. 3.* See what need we have to keep our mouth as with a bridle, when our heart is not within us, for the language of fretfulness is commonly very offensive. (4.) They shall abandon themselves to despair, and which way soever they look, shall see no probability of relief; they shall look upward, but heaven shall frown upon them and look gloomy; and how can it be otherwise, when they curse their God? they shall look to the earth, but what comfort can they yield to those whom God is at war with? There is nothing there but trouble, and darkness, and dimness of anguish, every thing threatening, and not one pleasant gleam, not one hopeful prospect; but they shall be driven to darkness by the violence of their own fears, which represent every thing about them black and frightful: This explains what he had said, *ver. 20.* that there shall be no light to them. Those that turn their eyes against the light of God's word

will justly be abandoned to darkness, and left to wander endlessly, and the sparks of their own kindling will do them no kindness.

C H A P. IX.

The prophet in this chapter, according to the directions given him, chap. iii. 10, 11. saith to the righteous, it shall be well with them, but woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him. Here is, 1. Gracious promises to those that adhere to the law and to the testimony; while those that seek to familiar spirits, shall be driven into darkness and dimness they shall see a great light; relief in the midst of their distresses, typical of gospel grace. (1.) In the doctrine of the Messiah, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) His victories, *ver. 4, 5.* (3.) His government and dominion, as Immanuel, *ver. 6, 7.* 2. Dreadful threatenings against the people of Israel, that had revolted from, and were enemies to the house of David, that they should be brought to utter ruin; that their pride should bring them down, *ver. 8—10.* that their neighbours should make a prey of them, *ver. 11, 12.* that for their impotence and hypocrisy, all their ornaments and supports should be cut off, *ver. 13—17.* and that by the wrath of God against them, and their wrath one against another, they should be brought to utter ruin, *ver. 18—21.* And this is typical of the final destruction of all the enemies of the son of David and his kingdom.

1. **N**EVERTHELESS the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. 2. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. 3. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. 4. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. 5. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. 6. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

The first words of this chapter plainly refer to the close of the foregoing chapter, where every thing looked black and melancholy, *Behold trouble, and darkness, and dimness;* very bad, yet not so bad, but that to the upright there shall arise light in the darkness, *Psal. cxli. 1.* and at evening time it shall be light, *Zech. xiv. 7.* Nevertheless, it shall not be such dimness, either not such for kind, or not such for degree, as sometimes there has been. Note, In the worst of times God's people have a *nevertheless* to comfort themselves with, something to allay and balance their troubles; they are persecuted, but not forsaken, *2 Cor. iv. 9.* sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, *2 Cor. vi. 10.* And it is matter of comfort to us when things are at the darkest, that he who forms the light, and creates the darkness, (*Iza. xlv. 7.*) hath appointed both their bounds, and set the one over against the other, *Gen. i. 4.* He can say, Hitherto the dimness shall go, so long it shall last, and no further, no longer. Three things are here promised, and they all point ultimately at the grace of the gospel, which the saints were to comfort themselves with the hopes of in every cloudy and dark day, as we are now to comfort ourselves in time of trouble with the hopes of Christ's second coming, though that be now, as his first coming then was, a thing at a great distance. The mercy likewise which God hath in store for his church in the latter days, may be a support to those that are mourning with her for her present calamities. We have here the promise,

1. Of a glorious light, which shall so qualify and by degrees dispel the dimness, that it shall not be as it sometimes hath been; *not such as was in her vexation,* there shall not be such dark times as were formerly when at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, which lay remote and most exposed to the inroads of the neighbouring enemies; and afterwards he more grievously afflicted the land by the way of the sea and beyond Jordan, *ver. 1.* referring probably to those days when God began to cut Israel short, and to smite them in all their coasts, *2 Kings x. 22.* Note, (1.) God tries what lesser judgments will do with a people, before he brings greater. But, (2.) If a light affliction do not do its work with us, to humble and reform us, we must expect to be afflicted more grievously, for when God judgeth he will overcome.

Well, those were dark times with the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and there was dimness of anguish in Galilee of the Gentiles, both in respect of ignorance, they did not speak according to the law and to the testimony, and then there was no light in them, chap. viii. 20. and in respect of trouble, and the desperate posture of their outward affairs, we have both together, *2 Chron. xv. 3—5.* Israel has been without the true God and a teaching priest, and in those times there was no peace: but the dimness threatened, chap. viii. 22. shall not prevail to such a degree; for, *ver. 2.* The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. (1.) At this time when the prophet lived, there were many prophets in Judah and Israel, whose prophecies were a great light both for direction and comfort to the people of God, who adhered to the law and the testimony; besides the written word, they had prophecy, there were those that had shewed them how long, *Psal. lxxiv. 9:* which was a great satisfaction to them, when in respect of their outward troubles that sat in darkness, and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death. (2.) This was to have its full accomplishment when our Lord Jesus began to appear as a prophet, and to preach the gospel in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and in Galilee of the Gentiles. And the Old Testament prophets, as they were witnesses to him, so they were types of him. When he came and dwelt in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, then this prophecy is said to be fulfilled, *Matt. iv. 13, 14, 15, 16.* Note, 1. Those that

that want the gospel walk in darkness, and know not what they do or whither they go; and they dwell in the land of the shadow of death, in thick darkness, and in the utmost danger. 2. When the gospel comes to any place, to any soul, light comes, a great light, a shining light, which will shine more and more. It should be welcome to us, as light is to them that sit in darkness, and we should readily entertain it; both because it is of such sovereign use to us, and brings its own evidence with it. Truly this light is sweet.

2. Of a glorious increase, and an universal joy arising from it, *ver. 3.* *Thou, O God, hast multiplied the nation*; the Jewish nation, which thou hast mercy in store for; though it has been diminished by one sore judgment after another, yet now thou hast begun to multiply it again. The numbers of a nation are its strength and wealth, if the numerous be industrious: and it is God that increaseth nations, *Job xii. 23.* Yet it follows, *Thou hast not increased the joy*; not the carnal joy and mirth, nor those things that are commonly the matter and occasion of that: but notwithstanding that, they joy before thee, there is a great deal of serious, spiritual joy among them; joy in the presence of God, with an eye to him. This is very applicable to the times of gospel light, spoken of *ver. 2.* then God multiplied the nation, the gospel Israel. And to him (so the Masorites read it) thou hast magnified the joy to every one that receives the light; the following words favour this reading, they joy before thee; they come before thee in holy ordinances with great joy; their mirth is not like that of Israel, under their vines and fig-trees, thou hast not increased that joy, but it is in the favour of God and in the tokens of his grace. Note, The gospel when it comes in its light and power, brings joy along with it, and those who receive it aright, therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; therefore the conversion of the nations is prophesied of by this, *Psal. lxvii. 4.* Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, *Psal. xcvi. 11.* (1.) It is his holy joy; they joy before thee, they rejoice in spirit, as Christ did, *Luke x. 21.* and that is before God. In the eye of the world they are always as sorrowful, and yet in God's sight *always rejoicing*, *2 Cor. vi. 10.* (2.) It is a great joy, it is according to the joy of harvest, when those who sowed in tears, and have with long patience waited for the pleasant fruits of the earth, reap in joy; and was in war that men rejoice, when after a hazardous battle they divide the spoil. The gospel brings with it plenty and victory; but those that would have the joy of it must expect to go through a hard work, as the husbandman before he has the joy of harvest; and a hard conflict, as the soldiers, before he has the joy of dividing the spoil; but the joy when it comes, will be an abundant recompence for the toil. See *Acts viii. 8-39.*

3. Of a glorious liberty and enlargement, *ver. 3, 5.* they shall rejoice before thee, and with good reason, for thou hast broken the yoke of his burden and made him easy, for he shall no longer be in bondage; and thou hast broken the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of his oppressor, that rod of the wicked which refuse long of the lot of the righteous: as the Midianites' yoke was broken from off the neck of Israel by the agency of Gideon. If God makes former deliverances his patterns in working for us, we ought to make them our encouragements of hope in him, and to see him, *Psal. lxxxiii. 2.* Do unto them as to the Midianites. What temporal deliverance this refers to is not clear, probably the preventing of Sennacherib from making himself master of Jerusalem, which was done as in the day of Midian by the immediate hand of God: and whereas other battles used to be won with a great deal of noise, and by the expence of much blood, this shall be done silently, and without noise, *under his glory God shall kindle a burning*, *chap. x. 16.* a fire not blown shall consume him, *Job xx. 26.* But doubtless it looks farther, to the blessed fruits and effects of that great light which should visit them that sit in darkness; it would bring liberty along with it, *deliverance to the captives*, *Luke iv. 18.* (2.) The design of the gospel and the grace of it, is to break the yoke of sin and Satan, to remove the burden of guilt and corruption, and to free from the rod of those oppressors, that we might be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Christ broke the yoke of the ceremonial law, *Acts 15. 10.* *Gal. v. 1.* and delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear, *Luke i. 74, 75.* (2.) This is done by the Spirit working like fire, *Matt. iii. 11.* not at the battle of the warrior is fought, with confused noise: no, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but it is done with the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning, *chap. iv. 4.* It is done as in the day of Midian, by a work of God upon the hearts of men: Christ is our Gideon, it is his sword that doth wonders.

But who, where is he that shall undertake and accomplish these great things for the church? He tells us, *ver. 6, 7.* they shall be done by the Messiah, Immanuel, that son of a virgin, whose birth he had foretold, *chap. vii. 14.* and now speaks of it in the prophetic style as a thing already done the child is born; not only because it was certain, and he was as certain of it, as if it had been done already; but because the church before his incarnation reaped great benefit and advantage by his undertaking, in the virtue of that first promise concerning the seed of the woman, *Gen. iii. 15.* As he was the lamb slain, so he was the child born from the foundation of the world, *Rev. xiii. 8.* All the great things that God did for the Old Testament church, were done by him as the eternal Word, and for his sake as the Mediator: He was the anointed to whom God had respect, *Psal. lxxxiv. 2.* and it was for the Lord's sake, for the Lord Christ's sake, that God caused his face to shine upon his sanctuary, *Dan. ix. 17.* Therefore the Jewish nation, and particularly the house of David, were preserved many a time from imminent ruin, because that blessing was in them. What greater security therefore could be given to the church of God then, that it should be preserved, and be the special care of the divine providence, than this, that God had so great a mercy in reserve for it? The Chaldee paraphrase understands it of the man that shall endure for ever, even Christ. And it is an illustrious prophecy of him and of his kingdom, which doubtless, them that waited for the consolation of Israel built much upon, often turned to, and read with pleasure.

1. See him in his humiliation: the same that is the mighty God is a child born, the Ancient of days becomes the infant of a span long, the everlasting Father is a Son given. Such was his condescension in taking our nature upon him; thus did he humble and empty himself to exalt and fill us: He is born into our world: *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* He is given, freely given, to be all that to us which our case in our fallen state calls for; God so loved the world, that he gave him. He is born to us, he is given to us, us men, and not to the angels that sinned: it is spoken with an air of triumph, and the angel seem to refer to these words in the notice he gives to the shepherds of the Messiah's being come, *Luke ii. 11.* Unto you is born this day a Saviour. Note, Christ's being born and given to us, is the great foundation of our hopes, and fountain of our joys, in times of greatest grief and fear.

2. See him in his exaltation; this child; this son, this son of God, this son of man that is given to us, is in a capacity to do us a great deal of kindness; for he is invested with the highest honour and power, so that we cannot but be happy if he be our friend.

1. See the dignity he is advanced to, and the name he hath above every name: He shall be called (and therefore we are sure he is and shall be)

Wonderful, Counsellor, &c. His people shall know him and worship him by these names; and as one that fully answers them, they shall submit to him, and depend upon him.

(1.) He is a wonderful counsellor: justly is he called wonderful, for he is both God and man. His love is the wonder of angels and glorified saints; in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, he was wonderful. A constant series of wonders attended him; and without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness concerning him. He is the counsellor, for he was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God from eternity, and he gives counsel to the children of men, in which he consults our welfare. It is by him that God has given his counsel, *Psal. xvi. 7.* *Rev. iii. 18.* He is the wisdom of the Father, and is made of God to us wisdom. Some join these together; he is the wonderful counsellor, a wonder or miracle of a counsellor; in this, as in other things, he had the pre-eminence: none teacheth like him.

(2.) He is the mighty God: God the mighty One: as he has wisdom, so he has strength to go through with his undertaking: is able to save to the utmost: and such is the work of the Mediator, that no less a power than that of the mighty God could accomplish it.

(3.) He is the everlasting Father, or the Father of eternity; he is God, one with the Father, who is from everlasting to everlasting. His fatherly care of his people, and tenderness towards them, is everlasting. He is the author of everlasting life and happiness to them, and so is the Father, who read it; the Father of the gospel-state, which is put in subjection to him, not to the angels, *Heb. ii. 5.* He was from eternity Father of the great work of redemption: his art was upon it; it was the product of his wisdom, as the counsellor; of his love, as the everlasting Father.

(4.) He is the prince of peace; as a king he preserves the peace, commands peace; nay, he creates peace in his kingdom. He is our peace, and it is his peace that both keeps the heart of his people, and rules in them. He is not only a peaceable prince, and his reign peaceable; but he is the author and giver of all good, all that peace which is the present and future bliss of his subjects.

2. See the dominion he is advanced to, and the throne he has above every throne, *ver. 6.* The government shall be upon his shoulder; his only: he shall not only wear the badge of it upon his shoulder, the key of the house of David, *Isa. xxii. 22.* but he shall bear the burden of it. The Father shall devolve it upon him, so that he shall have an uncontrollable right to govern; and he shall undertake it, so that no doubt can be made of his governing well, for he shall set his shoulder to it, and will never complain as Moses did, of his being overcharged: *I am not able to bear all this people*, *Numb. xiv. 11-14.*

Glorious things are here spoken of Christ's government, *ver. 7.*

1. That it shall be an increasing government; it shall be multiplied, the bounds of his kingdom shall be more and more enlarged, and many shall be added to it daily; the lustre of it shall increase, and it shall shine more and more bright in the world. The monarchies of the earth were each less illustrious than the other; so that what began in gold ended in iron and clay, and every monarchy dwindled by degrees; but the kingdom of Christ is a growing kingdom, and will come to perfection at last.

2. That it shall be a peaceable government: agreeable to his character as the prince of peace. He shall rule by love, shall rule in men's hearts; so that wherever his government is, there shall be peace; and as his government increaseth, the peace shall increase; the more we are subject to Christ, the more easy and safe we are.

3. That it shall be a rightful government: he that is the son of David shall reign upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, which he is intitled to; *God shall give him the throne of his father David*, *Luke i. 32, 33.* The gospel church, in which Jew and Gentile are incorporate, is the holy hill of Zion, on which Christ reigns, *Psal. ii. 6.*

4. That it shall be administered with prudence and equity, and so as to answer the great end of government, which is the establishment of the kingdom; he shall order it and settle it with justice and judgment: every thing is and shall be well managed in the kingdom of Christ, and none of his subjects shall ever have cause to complain.

5. That it shall be an everlasting kingdom: there shall be no end of the increase of his government, it shall be still growing; no end of the increase of the peace of it; for the happiness of the subjects of this kingdom shall last to eternity, and perhaps shall be progressive in infinitum: he shall reign from henceforth even for ever; not only throughout all generations of time, but even then when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, the glory both of the Redeemer and the redeemed shall continue eternally.

6. That God himself hath undertaken to bring all this about; the Lord of hosts, who hath all power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck, shall perform this, shall preserve the throne of David till this Prince of peace is settled in it; his zeal shall do it; his jealousy for his own honour, and the truth of his promise, and the good of his church. Note, The art of God is much upon the advancement of the kingdom of Christ among men; which is very comfortable to all those that with well to it; the zeal of the Lord of hosts will overcome all opposition.

8. ¶ The LORD sent a word unto Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. 9. ¶ And all the people shall know even Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart. 10. The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars. 11. Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together. 12. The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. 13. ¶ For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts. 14. Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. 15. The ancient and honourable, he is the head: and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. 16. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that they are led of them are destroyed. 17. Therefore the LORD shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widow: for every one is an hypocrite and

an evil doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. 11. ¶ For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. 19. Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. 20. And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: 21. Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Here are terrible threatenings, which are directed primarily against Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, Ephraim and Samaria; the ruin of which is here foretold, with all the woful confusions that were the prefaces to that ruin, all which came to pass within a few years after; but they look farther to all the enemies of the throne and kingdom of Christ, the son of David, and read the doom of all the nations that forget God, and will not have Christ to reign over them. Observe,

1. The preface to this prediction, *ver. 8.* *The Lord sent a word unto Jacob;* sent it by his servants the prophets; he warns before he wounds: he sent notice, what he would do, that they might meet him in the way of his judgments, but they would not take the hint; took no care to turn away his wrath, and so it lighted upon Israel; for no word of God shall fall to the ground. It fell upon them as a storm of rain and hail from on high, which they could not avoid. It has lighted upon them, *i. e.* it is as sure to come as if it were come already: and all the people shall know by feeling it, what they would not know by hearing of it. Those that are willingly ignorant of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against sin and sinners, shall be made to know it.

2. The sins charged upon the people of Israel, which provoked God to bring these judgments upon them.

(1.) Their insolent defiance of the justice of God, thinking themselves a match for him; they say in the pride and stoutness of their heart, Let God himself do his worst, they will hold their own, and make their part good with him; if he ruin their houses, they will repair them, and make them stronger and finer than they were before; their landlord shall not turn them out of doors, though they pay him no rent, but they will keep in possession. If the houses that were built with bricks be demolished in the war, we will rebuild them with hewn stones, that shall not so easily be thrown down. If the enemy cut down the sycamores, we will plant cedars in the room of them; we will make a hand of God's judgment, gain by them, and so outbrave them. Note, Those are ripening apace for ruin, whose hearts are unhumiliated under humbling providences; for God will walk contrary to those who thus walk contrary to him, and provoke him to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he.

(2.) Their incorrigibility under all the rebukes of providence hitherto, *ver. 13.* *The people turneth not unto him that smiteth them;* they are not wrought upon to reform their lives, to forsake their sins, and to return to their duty, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts; either they are atheists, and have no religion, or idolaters, and seek to those gods that are the creatures of their own fancy, and the works of their own hands. Note, That which God designs in smiting us, to turn us to himself, and to set us a seeking him; and if this point be not gained by lesser judgments, greater may be expected. God smites that he may not kill.

(3.) Their general corruption of manners and abounding profaneness. (1.) Those that should have reformed them, helped to debauch them, *ver. 16.* *The leaders of this people mislead them,* and cause them to err by conniving at their wickedness, and countenancing wicked people, and by setting them ill examples; and then no wonder if they that are led of them be deceived, and so destroyed; but it is ill with a people when their physicians are their worst disease. *Then that bless this people or call them blessed,* (so the margin reads it) that flatter them, and soothe them up in their wickedness, and cry peace, peace to them, they cause them to err; and they that are called blessed of them are swallowed up ere they are aware. We have reason to be afraid of those that speak well of us when we do ill; see *Prov. xxiv. 24.* and *xxix. 5.*

(2.) Wickedness was universal, and all were infected with it, *ver. 17.* *Every one is an hypocrite and evil doer.* If there be any that are good, they do not, they dare not appear; for every mouth speaks folly and villainy, every one is profane towards God, (so the word properly signifies) and an evil doer towards man: these two commonly go together, they that fear not God, regard not man; and then every mouth speaks folly, falsehood, and reproach, both against God and man; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

(3.) The judgments threatened against them for his wickedness of their's; let them not think to go unpunished.

1. In general: Hereby they exposed themselves to the wrath of God, which should both devour as fire and darken as smoke. (1.) It should devour as fire, *ver. 11.* *Wickedness shall burn as the fire;* *i. e.* the displeasure of God incurred by sin shall consume the sinners, who have made themselves as briers and thorns before it, and as the thickets of the forest; combustible matter, which the wrath of the Lord of hosts, the mighty God, will go through and burn together. (2.) It should darken as smoke; the briers and thorns when the fire consumes them, shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke, so that the whole land shall be darkened by it; they shall be in trouble and see no way out, *ver. 19.* *The people shall be as the fuel of the fire:* God's wrath fastens upon none but those that make themselves fuel for it, and then they mount up as the smoke of sacrifices, being made victims to divine justice.

2. God would arm the neighbouring powers against them, *ver. 11, 12.* At this time the kingdom of Israel was in league with that of Syria against Judah; but the Assyrians, who were adversaries to the Syrians, when they had conquered them, should invade Israel, and God will stir them up to do it, and join the enemies of Israel together in alliance against them, who yet have particular ends of their own to serve, and are not aware of God's hand in their alliance. Note, 1. When enemies are set up and joined in confederacy against a people, God's hand must be acknowledged in it. 2. Those that partake with each other in sin, at Syria and Israel in invading Judah, must expect to share in the punishment of sin.

3. The Syrians themselves, that they were now in league with, should be a scourge to them, (for it is no unusual thing for those to fall out that have been one in an ill thing) they before, and the Philistines behind; one attacking them in the front, the other flanking them, or falling upon their

rear; so that they should be surrounded with enemies on all sides, that should devour them with open mouth, *ver. 12.* The Philistines were not now looked upon as formidable enemies, and the Syrians were looked upon as fast friends, and yet these shall devour Israel. When men's way displeases the Lord, he makes even their friends to be at war with them.

3. God would take from the midst of them those they confided in and promised themselves help from, *ver. 14, 15.* Because the people seek not God, those they seek to and depend upon shall stand them in no stead. The Lord will cut off head and tail, branch and rush, which is explained in the next verse. (1.) Their magistrates that were honourable by birth and office, and were the ancients of the people, these were the head, those were the branch, which they promised themselves spirit and fruit from; but because these caused them to err, they shall be cut off, and their dignity and power shall be no protection to them, when the abuse of that dignity and power was the great provocation; and it was a judgment upon the people to have their princes cut off, though they were not such as they should be. (2.) Their prophets, their false prophets, were the tail and the rush, the most despicable of all others. A wicked minister is the worst of men; *Corruptio optimi est pessima.* The blind led the blind, and so both fell into the ditch, and the blind leaders fell first and fell undermost.

4. That the desolation should be as general as the corruption had been, and none should escape it, *ver. 17.* (1.) Not those that were the objects of complacency; none shall be spared for love: *The Lord shall have no joy in their young men,* that were in the flower of their youth; nor will he say, *Deal gently with the young men for my sake;* no, let them fall with the rest, and with them let the seed of the next generation perish. (2.) Not those that were the objects of compassion; none shall be spared for pity. He shall not have mercy on the fatherless and widows, though he useth to be in a particular manner their patron and protector; they had corrupted their way like all the rest; and if the poverty and helplessness of their state was not an argument with them to keep them from sin, they could not expect it should be an argument with God to protect them from judgments.

5. That they should pull one another to pieces, and every one should help forward the common ruin, and they should be cannibals to themselves, and one another; *No man shall spare his brother,* if he come in the way of his ambition or covetousness, or if he have any colour to be revenged on him; and how can they expect God shall spare them, when they show no compassion one to another? Men's passion and cruelty one against another provokes God to be angry with them all, and is an evidence that he is so. Civil wars soon bring a kingdom to desolation; such there were in Israel, when for the transgression of the land many were the princes thereof, 2 Kings xiv. 10. In the intestine broils men snatched on the right hand, and yet were hungry still, and did devour the flesh of their own arm, preyed upon themselves for hunger, or upon their nearest relations that were as their own flesh, *ver. 20.* This speaks, (1.) Great famine and scarcity; when men had pulled all they could to them, it was so little that they were still hungry, at least God did not bless it to them, so that they eat and have not enough, *Haggai. i. 6.* (2.) Great rapine and plunder, *Jusque datum sceleris.* The hedge of property, which is a head of protection to men's estates, shall be plucked up, and every man shall think all that his own which he can lay his hands on; *vivitur ex rapto, non hospes ab hospite tutus.* And yet when men thus catch at that which is none of their own, they are not satisfied. Covetous desires are insatiable, and this curse is entailed on that which is ill got, that it will never do well.

These intestine broils should be not only among particular persons and private families, but among the tribes, *ver. 21.* Manasseh shall devour Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, though they together be against Judah. They that could unite against Judah, could not unite with one another; but that sinful confederacy of their's against their neighbour that dwelt securely by them, was justly punished by this separation of them one from another. Or Judah having sinned like Manasseh and Ephraim, shall not only suffer with them, but suffer by them. Note, Mutual enmity and animosity among the tribes of God's Israel, is such a sin that ripens them for ruin, and a sad symptom of ruin hastening on apace. If Ephraim be against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, and both against Judah, they will all soon become a very easy prey to the common enemy.

6. That though they should be followed with all those judgments, yet God would not let fall his controversy with them. It is the heavy burden of this song, *ver. 12.* again, *ver. 17.* and in the close, *vers. 21.* *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still;* *i. e.* (1.) They do nothing to turn away his anger; they do not repent and reform, do not humble themselves and pray; none stand in the gap, none answer God's call, nor comply with the designs of his providences, but they are hardened and secure. (2.) His anger therefore continues to burn against them, and his hand is stretched out still. The reason why the judgments of God are prolonged is, because the point is not gained, sinners are not brought to repentance by them; *the people turneth not to him that smiteth them,* and therefore he continues to smite them; for when God judgeth he will overcome; and the proudest, stoutest sinner shall either bend or break.

C H A P. X.

The prophet in this chapter is dealing, (1.) With the proud oppressors of his people at home, that abused their power to pervert justice, whom he would reckon with for their tyranny, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) With a threatening invader of his people from abroad, Sennacherib, king of Assyria: concerning whom observe, (1.) The commission given him to invade Judah, *ver. 5, 6.* (2.) His pride and insolence in the execution of that commission, *ver. 7—11—13, 14.* (3.) A rebuke given to his haughtiness, and a threatening of his fall and ruin, when he had served the purposes for which God raised him up, *ver. 12—15—19.* (4.) A promise of grace to the people of God, to enable them to bear up under the affliction and to get good by it, *ver. 20—23.* (5.) Great encouragement given to them not to fear this threatening storm, but to hope that though for the present all the country was put into a great consternation by it, yet it would end well in the destruction of this formidable enemy, *ver. 24—32.* And this is intended to quiet the minds of good people in reference to all the threatening efforts of the wrath of the church's enemies: if God be for us, who can be against us? None to do us any harm.

1. **W**OE unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; 2. To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless! 3. And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far?

far? to whom will ye flee for help! and where will ye leave your glory? 4. Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain. For all his anger is not turned away; but his hand is stretched out still.

Whether they were the princes and judges of Israel, or Judah, or both, that the prophet denounced this woe against, is not certain: if those of Israel, these verses are to be joined with the close of the foregoing chapter; which is probable enough, because the burden of that prophecy, *for all this his anger is not turned away*, is repeated here, *ver. 4.* If those of Judah, they then shew what was the particular sin for which God brought the Assyrian army upon them, to punish their magistrates for mal-administration, which they could not legally be called to account for. To them he speak woes before he speaks comfort to God's own people.

Here is, 1. The indictment drawn up against these oppressors, *ver. 1, 2.* They are charged, (1.) With making wicked laws and edicts, they decree unrighteous decrees, contrary to natural equity and the law of God: and what mischief they prescribe, those under them write it, enrol it, and put it into the formality of a law. Woe to the superior powers that devise and decree these decrees, those are not too high to be under the divine check; and woe to the inferior officers that draw them up and enter them upon record, they are not too mean to be within the divine cognisance: *the writers that write the grievousness*; principal and accessories shall fall under the same woe. Note, It is bad to do hurt, but it is worse to do it with design and deliberation, to do wrong to many, and to involve many in the guilt of doing wrong. (2.) With perverting justice in the execution of the laws that were made: no people had statutes and judgments so righteous as they had; and yet corrupt judges found ways to turn aside the need from judgment, to hinder them from coming at their right, and recovering what was their due, because they were needy and poor, and such as they could get nothing by, nor expect any bribes from. (3.) With enriching themselves by oppressing those that lay at their mercy, whom they ought to have protected: they make widows' houses and estates their prey, and they rob the fatherless of the little that is left them, because they have no friend to appear for them. Not to relieve them if they had wanted, not to right them if they were wronged, had been crime enough in men that had wealth and power; but to rob them because on the side of the oppressors there was power, and the oppressor had no comforter, *Eccles. iv. 4.* is such a piece of barbarity, as one would think none could ever be guilty of, that had either the nature of a man or the name of an Israelite.

2. A challenge given them with all their pride and power to outface the judgments of God, *ver. 3.* *What will ye do? To whom will ye flee?* You can trample upon the widows and fatherless, but *what will ye do when God riseth up?* Job xxxi. 14. Great men that tyrannize over the poor, think they shall never be called to account for it, shall never hear of it again, or fare the worse for it; but *shall not God visit for these things?* Jer. v. 29. Will there not come a desolation upon those that have made others desolate? Perhaps it may come from far, and therefore may be long in coming, but it will come at last: reprieves are not pardons; and coming from far, from a quarter whence it was least expected, it will be the greater surprise, and the more terrible. Now what will then become of these unrighteous judges? Now they see their help in the gate, Job xxxi. 21. But to whom will they then flee for help? Note, 1. There is a day of visitation coming, a day of inquiry and discovery, a searching day, which will bring to light, to a true light, every man, and every man's work. 2. The day of visitation will be a day of desolation to all wicked people, when all their comforts and hopes will be lost and gone, and buried in ruin, and themselves left desolate. 3. Impenitent sinners will be utterly at a loss, and will not know what to do in the day of visitation and desolation. They cannot fly and hide themselves, cannot find it out and defend themselves: they have no refuge in which either to shelter themselves from the present evil, *To whom will ye flee for help?* or to secure themselves better times hereafter, *Where will you leave your glory to find it again when the storm is over?* The wealth they had got was their glory, and they had no place of safety in which to deposit that, but they should certainly see it flee away. If our souls be our glory, as they ought to be, and we make them our chief care, we know where to leave them, and into whose hands to commit them, even those of a faithful Creator. 4. It concerns us all seriously to consider what we shall do in the day of visitation, in a day of affliction, in the day of death and judgment, and to provide that we may do well.

3. Sentence passed upon them, by which they are doomed, some to imprisonment and captivity, *they shall bow down among the prisoners, or under them*: those that were most highly elevated in sin shall be most heavily loaded and most deeply sunk in trouble; others to death, they shall fall first, and so shall fall under the rest of the slain; they that had trampled upon the widows and fatherless, shall themselves be trodden down, *ver. 4.* This it will come to, faith God, without me; i. e. because you have deserted me, and driven me away from you. Nothing but utter ruin can be expected by those that live without God in the world; that cast him behind their back, and so cast themselves out of his protection.

And yet for all this his anger is not turned away; which intimates not only that God will proceed in his controversy with them, but that they shall be in a continual dread of it; they shall, to their unspeakable terror, see his hand still stretched out against them, and there shall remain nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment.

5. ¶ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. 6. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few. 8. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? 9. Is not Calno as Charchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? 10. As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; 11. Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? 12. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assy-

ria, and the glory of his high looks. 13. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom: for I am prudent; and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasure; and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: 14. And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. 15. Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith! or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood. 16. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory, he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. 17. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day; 18. And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. 19. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

The destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, was foretold in the foregoing chapter, and it had its accomplishment in the sixth year of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 10. It was total and final, head and tail were all cut off. Now the correction of the kingdom of Judah by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, is foretold in this chapter; and this prediction was fulfilled in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, when that potent prince, encouraged by the successes of his predecessor against the ten tribes, came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them, and laid siege to Jerusalem, 2 Kings xviii. 13. and a mighty fight we may well suppose Hezekiah and his kingdom to be in, though there was a good work of reformation lately begun among them: but it ended well in the confusion of the Assyrians, and the great encouragement of Hezekiah and his people in their return to God.

Now let us see here,

1. How God in his sovereignty deputed the king of Assyria to be his servant, and made use of him as a mere tool to serve his own purposes with, *ver. 5, 6.* O Assyrian, know this that thou art the rod of mine anger; and I will send thee to be a scourge to the people of my wrath. Observe here, (1.) How bad the character of the Jews is, though they appeared very good: they are an hypocritical nation, that made a profession of religion, and at this time particularly of reformation; but were not truly religious, not truly reformed, not so good as they pretended to be, now Hezekiah had brought goodness into fashion. When rulers are pious, and so religion is in reputation, it is common for nations to be hypocritical; they are a profane nation, so some read it. Hezekiah had in a great measure cured them of their idolatry, and now they run into profaneness; nay, hypocrisy is profaneness; none profane the name of God so much as those who are called by that name, and call upon it, and yet live in sin. Being a profane, hypocritical nation, they are the people of God's wrath; they lie under his wrath, and are likely to be consumed by it. Note, Hypocritical nations are the people of God's wrath: nothing is more offensive to God than dissimulation in religion. See what a change sin made: they that had been God's chosen and hallowed people, above all people, were now become the people of his wrath. See Amos iii. 2.

(2.) How mean the character of the Assyrian is, though he appeared very great: he is but the rod of God's anger; an instrument that God is pleased to make use of for the chastening of his people, that being thus chastened of the Lord, they may not be condemned with the world. Note, The tyrants of the world are but the tools of providence. Men are God's hand, his sword sometimes to kill and slay, Psalm xvii. 13, 14. At other times they are his rod to correct. The staff in their hand wherewith they smite his people, is his indignation: it is his wrath that puts the staff into their hand, and enables them to deal blows at pleasure among such as thought themselves a match for them. Sometime God make an idolatrous nation, that serves him not at all, a scourge to an hypocritical nation, that serves him not in sincerity and truth.

The Assyrian is called the rod of God's anger, because he is employed by him: (1.) From his power is derived; *I will send him, I will give him a charge.* Note, All the power that wicked men have, though they often use it against God, yet they always receive it from him. Pilate could have no power against Christ, unless it were given him from above, John xix. 11. By him the exercise of that power is directed; he is to take the spoil, and to take the prey, not to shed any blood; we read not of any slain, but to plunder their country, rife the houses, and drive the cattle, and strip them all their wealth and ornaments, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. When God's professing people wallow in the mire of sin, it is just with God to suffer their enemies to tread upon them like mire. But why must the Assyrian prevail thus against them? Not that they might be ruined, but that they might be thoroughly reformed.

2. See how the king of Assyria in his pride magnified himself as his own master, and pretended to be absolute, and above all control; to act purely according to his own will, and for his own honour: *God ordained him for judgment, even the mighty God established him for correction*, Hab. i. 12. to be an instrument of bringing his people to repentance; *howbeit he meaneth not so, neither does his heart think so*, *ver. 7.* He doth not think that he is either God's servant, or Israel's friend; either that he can do no more than God will let him, or that he shall do no more than God will make to work for the good of his people. God designs to correct his people for, and so to cure them of, their hypocrisy, and bring them nearer to him; but was that Sennacherib's design? No, it was the farthest thing from his thoughts: *he meaneth not so.* Note, 1. The wife God often makes even the sinful passions and projects of men, subservient to his own great and holy purposes. 2. When God makes use of men as instruments in his hand to do his work, it is very common for him to mean one thing, and them to mean another; nay, for them to mean quite the contrary to what he intends. What Joseph's brethren designed for hurt, God over-ruled for good, Gen. i. 20. See Mich. iv. 11, 12. Men have their ends, and God hath his, but we are sure the counsel of the Lord shall stand. But what is the proud Assyrian aims at? The heart of kings is unsearchable, but God knew what was in his heart: he designs nothing but to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few.

and to make himself master of them. (1.) He designs to gratify his own cruelty; nothing will serve but to destroy, and cut off: he hopes to regale himself with blood and slaughter, that of particular persons will not suffice, he must cut off nations: it is below him to deal by retail, he traffics in men by wholesale; nations, and those not a few, must have but one neck, which he will have the pleasure of cutting off. (2.) He designs to gratify his own covetousness and ambition, to set up for an universal monarch, and to gather unto him all nations, Hab. ii. 5. An insatiable desire of wealth and dominion is that which carries him on in this undertaking.

The prophet here brings him in vaunting and hectoring, and by his general's letter to Hezekiah written in his name, vain-glory and arrogance seem to have entered very far into the spirit and genius of the man. His haughtiness and presumption are here described very largely, and his very language copied-out partly to represent him as ridiculous, and partly to assure the people of God that he would be brought down; for that maxim generally holds true, that pride goes before destruction. It also intimates, that God takes notice and keeps an account of all men's proud and haughty words, with which they set heaven and earth at defiance. They that speak great swelling words of vanity, shall hear of them again.

1. He brags what great things he had done to other nations.

(1.) He has made their kings his courtiers, *ver. 8. My princes are altogether kings*; i. e. Those that are now my princes, are such as have been kings; or he means, that he had raised his throne to that degree, that his servants, and those that were in command under him, were as great, and lived in as much pomp, as the king of other countries: or, those that were absolute princes in their own dominions, had held their crowns under him and did him homage. This was a vain-glorious boast; but how great is our God whom we serve, who is indeed King of kings, and whose subjects are made to him kings! *Rev. i. 5.* (2.) He has made himself master of their cities he names several, *ver. 9.* that were all alike reduced by him; Calno soon yielded as Carchemish did; Hamath could not hold out no more than Arpad; and Samaria is become his as well as Damascus. To support his boasts, he is fain to bring the victories of his predecessor into the account; for it was he that conquered Samaria, not Sennacherib. (3.) He had been too hard for their idols, their tutelar gods, and had found out the kingdoms of the idols, and found out ways to make them his own. *ver. 10.* Their kingdoms took denomination from the idols they worshipped; the Moabites are called the people of Chemosh, *Jer. xlviii. 46.* because they imagined their gods were their patrons and protectors; and therefore Sennacherib vainly imagines that every conquest of a kingdom was the conquest of a god. (4.) He had enlarged his own dominions, and removed the bounds of the people, *ver. 13.* including many large territories within the limits of his own kingdom, and shifting a great way farther the ancient land-marks, which his fathers had set; he could not bear to be hemmed in so close, but must have more room to thrive. By his removing the border of the people. Mr. White understands, his arbitrary transplanting of colonies from place to place, which was the constant practice of the Assyrians in all their conquests; which is a probable interpretation. (5.) He had enriched himself with their wealth, and brought it into his own exchequer; *I have robbed their treasures*; in that said he truly. Great conquerors are many times no better than great robbers. (6.) He had mastered all the opposition he met with; *I have put down the inhabitants as a valiant man*; those that sat high, and thought they sat firm, I have humbled them, and made them come down.

He brags, (1.) That he had done all this by his own policy and power, *ver. 13. By the strength of my hand, for I am valiant; and by my wisdom, for I am prudent*; not by the permission of providence, and the blessings of God: he knows not that it is God that makes him what he is, and puts the staff into his hand, but *sacrificeth to his own net*, Hab. i. 16. It is all gotten by my might, and the power of my hand, *Deut. vii. 17.* There is downright atheism and profaneness, as well as pride and vanity, at the bottom of men's attributing their prosperity and success thus to themselves and their own conduct, and raising their own character upon it. (2.) That he had done all this with a great deal of ease, and had made but a sport and diversion of it, as if he had been taking birds' nests, *ver. 14. My hand has found as a nest the riches of the people*, and when I had found them, there was no more difficulty in taken them than in rilling a nest, nor any more reluctance or regret within his own breast, in destroying families and cities, than in destroying crow's nests; killing children was no more to him than killing birds. As one gather the eggs that are left in the nest by the dam, so easily have I gathered all the earth; (like Alexander he thought he had conquered the world) and whatever prey he seized, there was none that moved the wing, or moved the mouth, or peeped, as birds used to do when their nests are rilled; they durst not make any opposition, no, nor any complaint; such awe did they stand in of this mighty conqueror; they were so weak that they knew it was to no purpose to resist, and he was so arbitrary that they knew it was to no purpose to complain. Strange! that ever men who were made to do good, should take a pride, and take a pleasure in doing wrong, and doing mischief to all about them without controul; and should reckon that their glory which is their shame! but their day will come to fall who thus make themselves the terror of the mighty, and much more of the feeble, in the land of the living.

(2.) He threatens what he will do to Jerusalem, which he was now about to lay siege to, *ver. 10, 11.* He would master Jerusalem and her idols, as he had subdued other places and their idols, particularly Samaria. (1.) He blasphemously calls the God of Israel an idol, and sets him on a level with false gods of other nations, as if none were the true God but Mithras, the sun, whom he worshipped. See how ignorant he was, and then we shall the less wonder that he was so proud. (2.) He prefers the graven images of other countries before those of Jerusalem and Samaria, when he might have known, that the worshippers of the God of Israel were expressly forbidden to make any graven images, and if any did, it must be by stealth, and therefore they could not be so rich and pompous as those of other nations; if he mean the ark and the mercy-seat, he speaks like himself, very foolishly, and as one that judged by the sight of the eye, and might therefore be easily deceived in matters of spiritual concern. Those who make external pomp and splendor a mark of the true church, go by the same rule. (3.) Because he had conquered Samaria, he concludes Jerusalem would fall of course; *Shall not I do so to Jerusalem?* i. e. Can I not as easily; and may I not as justly? but it did not follow, for Jerusalem adhered to her God, whereas Samaria had forsaken him.

3. See how God in his justice rebukes his pride, and reads his doom. We have heard what the great king, the king of Assyria, saith, and how big he talks; let us now hear what the great God hath to say by his servant the prophet, and we shall find that wherein he deals proudly God is above him.

1. He shews the vanity of his insolent and audacious boasts, *ver. 15. Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that draws it?* So absurd are the brags of this proud man. O what a dust do I make! saith the fly upon the cart-wheel, in the fable. What destruction do I make among the trees! saith the ax.

Two ways the ax may be said to boast itself against him that heweth with it.

(1.) By way of resistance and opposition. Sennacherib blasphemed God, insulted him, threatened to serve him as he had served the gods of the nations; now this was as if the ax should fly in the face of him that hews with it. The tool striving with the workman is no less absurd than the clay striving with the potter: and as it is a thing not to be justified, that men should fight against God with that wit, and wealth, and power, which he gives them; so it is a thing not to be suffered; but if men will be thus proud and daring, and bid defiance to all that is just and sacred, let them expect that God will reckon with them: the more insolent they are, the surer and surer will their ruin be. (2.) By way of rivalry and competition; Shall the ax take to itself the praise of the work it is employed in? So senseless, so absurd was it for Sennacherib to say, *By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom*, *ver. 13.* It is, as if the rod when it is shaken, should brag that it guides the hand that shakes it; whereas when the staff is lifted up, is it not wood still? so the last clause may be read; if it be an ensign of authority, (as the nobles of the people carried staves, *Numb. xxi. 18.*) if it be an instrument of service, either to support a workman, or to correct an ill man, yet still it is wood, and can do nothing but as it is directed by him that useth it. The psalmist prays that God would make the nations to know that they were but men, *Psal. ix. 20.* the staff to know that it is but wood.

2. He foretells his fall and ruin.

1. That when God hath done his work by him, he will then do his work upon him, *ver. 12.* For the comfort of the people of God, in reference to Sennacherib's invasion, though it was a dismal time with them, let them know, (1.) That God designed to do good to Zion and Jerusalem by this providence: there is a work to be done upon them, which God intends; and which he will perform. Note, When God lets loose the enemies of his church and people, and suffers them for a time to prevail, it is in order to the performing of some great good work upon them, and when that is done, then, and not till then, he will work deliverance for them. When God brings his people into trouble, it is to try them, *Dan. xi. 35.* to bring sin to their remembrance, and humble them for it, and to awaken them to a sense of their duty, to teach them to pray, and to love and help one another; and *this must be the fruit, even the taking away of sin*, *Isa. xxvii. 9.* When these points are, in some measure, gained by the affliction, it shall be removed in mercy, *Lev. xxvi. 41, 42.* otherwise not; for as the word, so the rod shall accomplish that for which God sends it. (2.) That when God had wrought this work of grace for his people, he would work a work of wrath and vengeance upon their invaders; *I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria*; his big words are here said to come from his stout heart, and they are the fruit of it, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; notice is taken too of the glory of his high looks, for a proud look is the indication of a proud spirit. The enemies of the church are commonly very high and haughty; but sooner or later God will reckon for that: he glories in it as an incontestible proof of his power and sovereignty, that he looks upon proud men and abaseth them, *Job xl. 11, &c.*

2. That how threatening soever this attempt was upon Zion and Jerusalem it should certainly be baffled and broken, and come to nothing, and he should not be able to bring to pass his enterprise, *ver. 16, 17, 18, 19.* Observe,

1. Who it is that undertakes his destruction, and will be the author of it; not Hezekiah, or his princes, or the militia of Judah and Jerusalem; what can they do against such a potent force? but God himself will do it as the Lord of hosts, and as the light of Israel. (1.) We are sure he can do it, for he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth; all the creatures are at his commands, he makes what use he pleaseth of them, and lays what restraints he pleaseth on them: he is the Lord of the hosts both of Judah and Assyria, and can give the victory to which he pleaseth. Let us not fear the hosts of any enemy, if we have the Lord of hosts for us. (2.) We have reason to hope he will do it, for he is the light of Israel, and his Holy One. God is light; in him there is perfect brightness, purity and happiness; he is light, for he is the Holy One; his holiness is his glory; he is Israel's light to direct and counsel his people, to favour and countenance them, and so to rejoice and comfort them in the worst of times: he is their Holy One, for he is in covenant with them; his holiness is engaged and employed for them. God's holiness is the saints' comfort; they give thanks at the remembrance of it, and with a great deal of pleasure calls him their Holy One, *Hab. i. 12.*

2. How this destruction is represented: it shall be, (1.) As a consumption of the body by a disease; *The Lord shall send leanness among his fattest*, or his fat ones; his numerous army that was like a body covered with fatness, shall be diminished, and waste away, and become like a skeleton. (2.) As a consumption of buildings, or trees and bushes, by fire; under his glory, that very thing which he glories in, he will kindle a burning, as the burning of a fire, which shall lay his army in ruins, as suddenly as a raging fire lays a stately house in ashes. Some make it an allusion to the fire kindled under the sacrifices, for proud sinners fall as a sacrifice to divine justice. Observe, (1.) How this fire shall be kindled, *ver. 17.* the same God that is a rejoicing light to them that serve him faithfully, will be a consuming fire to them that trifle with him, or rebel against him; the light of Israel shall be for a fire to the Assyrians, as the same pillar of cloud was a light to the Israelites, and a terror to Egyptians in the Red-sea. What can oppose, what can extinguish such a fire? (2.) What desolation it shall make; *It shall burn and devour its thorns and briers*, his officers and soldiers, which are of little worth, and vexatious to God's Israel, as thorns and brier's whose end is to be burned; and which are easily and quickly consumed by a devouring fire, *Isa. xxvii. 4.* Who would set the briers and thorns against me in a bottle? they will be so far from stopping the fire, that they will inflame it; *I would go through them and burn them together*; they shall be devoured in one day, all cut off in an instant; when they cried: not only peace and safety, but victory and triumph, than sudden destruction came; it came surprisingly, and was completed in a little time. Even the glory of his forest, *ver. 18.* the choice troops of his army, the veterans, the troops of the household, the bravest regiments he had, that he was most proud of, and depended most upon; that he values, as men do their timber-trees the glory of their forest, or their fruit-trees the glory of their Carmel; those shall be put as briers and thorns before the fire; they shall be consumed both soul and body, entirely consumed, not only a limb burned, but life taken away. Note, God is able to destroy both soul and body, and therefore we should fear him more than man, who can but kill the body; and great armies before him are but as great woods, which he can fell or fire, when he pleaseth.

And what would be the effect of this great slaughter; the prophet tells us; (1.) That the army would hereby be reduced to a very small number; *the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few*; very few that escape the sword of the destroying angel; so few that there needs no artist, no muster-master, or secretary of war to take an account of them, for even a child may soon reckon the number of them, and write the names of them. (2.) That those few that remained should be quite dispirited; *They shall be as when a standard*.

standard-bearer fainteth; when he either falls or flees, and his colours are taken by the enemy, this discourageth the whole army, and puts them all into confusion. Upon the whole matter we must say, *Who is able to stand before this great and holy Lord God?*

20. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21. The remnant shall return, *even* the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. 22. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. 23. For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.

The prophet had said, *ver. 12.* that the Lord would perform his whole work upon mount Zion and upon Jerusalem, by Sennacherib's invading of the land: now here we are told what work that should be. A two-fold work.

1. The conversion of some, to whom this providence should be sanctified, and yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, though for the present it was not joyous but grievous; these are but a remnant, *ver. 22.* the remnant of Israel, *ver. 20.* the remnant of Jacob, *ver. 21.* but a very few in comparison with the vast numbers of the people of Israel, which were as the sand of the sea. Note, Converting work is wrought but on a remnant, who are distinguished from the rest, and set apart for God. When we see how populous Israel is, how numerous the members of the visible church are, as the sand of the sea, and yet consider that of those a remnant only shall be saved; that of the many that are called, there are but few chosen; we shall surely strive to enter in at the straight gate, and fear lest we seem to come short. This remnant of Israel is said to be such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, such as escaped the corruptions of the house of Jacob, and kept their integrity in times of common apostasy; and that was a fair escape; and therefore they escape the desolations of that house, and shall be preserved in safety in times of common calamity; and that also will be a fair and narrow escape: Their lives shall be given them for a prey, *Jer. xlv. 5.* the righteous scarcely are saved.

Now, 1. This remnant shall come off from all confidence in an arm of flesh, this providence shall cure them of that; they shall no more again stay upon him that smote them, i. e. shall never depend upon the Assyrians they have done, for help against their other enemies, finding that they are themselves their worst enemies; *Isa. pifator sapit*: they have now learned by dear-bought experience the folly of the leaning upon that staff as a stay to them, which may perhaps prove a staff to beat them; it is part of the covenant of a returning people, *Hos. xiv. 3.* Assyria shall not save us. Note, By our afflictions we may learn not to make creatures our confidence.

2. They shall come home to God, to the mighty God, one of the names given to the Messiah, *chap. ix. 6.* to the Holy one of Israel. The remnant shall return; that was signified by the name of the prophet's son, Shear-jashub, *chap. vii. 3.* even the remnant of Jacob; they shall return after the raising of the seed of Jerusalem, not only to the quiet possession of their houses and lands, but shall return to God and to their duty; they shall repent and pray, and seek his face, and reform their lives; the remnant that escapes is a returning remnant; they shall return to God, and shall stay upon him. Note, Those only may with comfort stay upon God, that return to him; then may we have a humble confidence in God, when we make conscience of our duty to him: They shall stay upon the Holy One of Israel in truth, and not in pretence and profession only. This promise of the conversion and salvation of a remnant of Israel now, is applied by the apostle, *Rom. ix. 27.* to the remnant of the Jews, which at the first preaching of the gospel received and entertained it; and sufficiently proves, that it was no new thing for God to abandon to ruin a great many of the seed of Abraham, and yet preserve his promise to Abraham in full force and virtue; for so it was now: The number of the children of Israel was as the sand of the sea, according to the promise, *Gen. xxii. 17.* and yet only a remnant shall be saved.

2. The consumption of others; the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, *ver. 23.* this is not meant as that, *ver. 18.* of the consumption of the Assyrian army, but of the consumption of the estates and families of many of the Jews by the Assyrian army. This is taken notice of to magnify the power and goodness of God, in the escape of the distinguished remnant; and to let us know what will become of those that will not return to God; they shall be wasted away by this consumption, this general decay in the midst of the land. Observe, (1.) It is a consumption of God's own making; he is the author of it; the Lord God of hosts whom none can resist, he shall make this consumption. (2.) It is decreed, it is not the product of a sudden resolve, but was before ordained; it is determined, not only that there shall be such a consumption, but it is cut out (so the word is,) it is particularly appointed how far it shall extend, and how long it shall continue, who shall be consumed by it, and who not. (3.) It is an overflowing consumption that shall overspread the land, and, like a mighty torrent or inundation bear down all before it. (4.) Though it overflows, it is not at random but in righteousness, which signifies both wisdom and equity. God will justly bring this consumption upon a provoking people, but he will wisely and graciously set bounds to it; *Hitherto it shall come, and no farther.*

24. ¶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, O my people, that dwelleth in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. 25. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction. 26. And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him, according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt. 27. And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing. 28. He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his

carriages: 29. They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. 30. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. 31. Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. 32. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. 33. Behold, the LORD, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. 34. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forests with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

The prophet, in his preaching, distinguisheth between the precious and the vile, for God in his providence, even in the same providence, doth so; he speaks terror in Sennacherib's invasion, to the hypocrites, that were the people of God's wrath, *ver. 6.* But here he speaks comfort to the sincere, that were the people of God's love. The judgment is sent for the sake of the former, the deliverance was wrought for the sake of the latter. Here is,

1. An exhortation to God's people, not to be frightened at this dreadful calamity, nor to be put into any confusion or consternation by it, *ver. 24.* Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, *chap. xxxiii. 14.* O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian. Note, It is against the mind and will of God that his people, whatever happens, should give way to that fear which has torment and amazement. They that dwell in Zion, where God dwells, and where his people attend him, and are employed in his service, that are under the protection of the bulwarks that are round about Zion, *Psal. xlviii. 13.* need not to be afraid of any enemy. Let their souls dwell at ease in God.

2. Considerations offered for the silencing of their fear:

1. The Assyrian shall do nothing against them but what God hath appointed and determined; they are here told beforehand what he shall do, that it may be no surprize to them: He shall smite thee by the divine permission, but it shall be only with a rod to correct thee, not with a sword to wound and kill: nay, he shall but lift up his staff against thee, threaten thee, and frighten thee, and shake the rod at thee, after the manner of Egypt, as the Egyptians shook their staff against your fathers at the Red-sea, when they said, *We will pursue, we will overtake*, *Exod. xv. 9.* but could not reach to do them any hurt. Note, We should not be frightened at those enemies that can do no more but frighten us.

2. The storm will soon blow over, *ver. 25.* Yet a very little while, a little, little while, so the word is, and the indignation shall cease, even mine anger which is the staff in their hand, *ver. 5.* so that when that ceaseth they are disarmed, and disabled to do any farther mischief. Note, God's anger against his people is but for a moment, *Psal. xxx. 5.* and when that ceaseth, and is turned away from us, we need not fear the fury of any man, for it is impotent passion.

3. The enemy that threatens them shall himself be reckoned with; God's anger against his people shall cease in the destruction of their enemies: when he turns away his wrath from Israel, he shall turn it against the Assyrian; and the rod with which he corrected his people, shall not only be laid aside but thrown into the fire; He lift up his staff against Zion, but God shall stir up a scourge for him, *ver. 26.* he is a terror to God's people, but God will be a terror to him; the destroying angel shall be this scourge, which he can neither flee from, nor contend with. The prophet, for the encouragement of God's people, quotes precedents, and puts them in mind of what God had done formerly against the enemies of his church, that were very strong and formidable, but were brought to ruin. The destruction of the Assyrian shall be, (1.) According to the slaughter of Midian, which was done by an invisible power, but done suddenly, and it was a total rout: And as at the rock of Oreb, one of the princes of Midian, after the battle, was slain, so shall Sennacherib be in the temple of his God Nisroch, after the defeat of his forces, when he thinks the bitterness of death is past. Compare with his, *Psal. lxxxiii. 11.* Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb, and see, how God's promises and his people's prayers agree. (2.) As his rod was upon the sea, the Red-sea, as Moses's rod was upon that to divide it, first for the escape of Israel, and then to close it again for the destruction of their pursuers, so shall his rod now be lifted up after the manner of Egypt for the deliverance of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Assyrian. Note, It is good to observe a resemblance between God's latter and former appearances for his people, and against his and their enemies.

4. They shall be wholly delivered from the power of the Assyrian, and from the fear of it, *ver. 27.* they shall not only be eased of the Assyrian army which now quartered upon them, and which was a grievous yoke and burden to them; but they shall no more pay that tribute to the king of Assyria, which before this invasion he had exacted from them, *2 Kings xviii. 14.* shall be no longer at his service, nor lie at his mercy as they have done; nor shall he ever again put the country under contribution: And some think it looks farther to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon; and farther yet to the redemption of believers from the tyranny of sin and Satan: The yoke shall not only be taken away, but shall be destroyed, the enemy shall no more recover his strength, to do the mischief he has done. And this because of the anointing, for their sakes, who were partakers of the anointing. (1.) For Hezekiah's sake, who was the anointed of the Lord, who had been an active reformer, and was dear to God. (2.) For David's sake, that is particularly given as the reason why God would defend Jerusalem from Sennacherib, *Isa. xxxvii. 35.* For my own sake, and for my servant David's sake. (3.) For his people Israel's sake, the good people among them that had received the unction of divine grace. (4.) For the sake of the Messiah, the Anointed of God, whom God had an eye to in all the deliverances of the Old Testament church, and hath still an eye to in all the favour he shews to his people; it is for his sake that the yoke is broken, and that we are made free indeed.

3. A description both of the terror of the enemy, and the terror with which many were struck by it, and the folly of both exposed, *ver. 21.* ad finem. Where observe,

1. How formidable the Assyrians were, and how daring and threatening they affected to appear: Here is a particular description of his march, what course he steered, what swift advances he made; He is come to Aiath, &c. This and the other place he had made himself master of, and has met with no opposition; At Michmash he has laid up his carriages, as if he had no farther occasion for his heavy artillery, so easily was every place he came to reduced: Or, the store-cities of Judah, which were fortified for that purpose,

poise, were now become his magazines. Some remarkable pafs, and an important one, he had taken, they are gone over the paffage.

2. How cowardly the men of Judah were, the degenerate feed of that lion's whelp; they are afraid, they are fled upon the first alarm, and did not offer to make any head against the enemy; their apostacy from God had dispirited them, so that one chafes a thousand of them: Instead of a valiant shout to animate one another, nothing was heard but lamentation to discourage and weaken one another: And poor Anathoth, a priest's city, that should have been a pattern of courage, shrieks louder than any, *ver. 30.* those that gathered themselves together, it was not to fight, but to flee by consent, *ver. 31.* This is designed either, (1.) To shew how fast the news of the enemy's progress flew through the kingdom; *He is come to Aiath*, faith one, nay faith another, *he is passed to Migron*, &c. And yet, perhaps it was not altogether so bad as common fame represented it. But we must watch against the fear, not only of evil things, but of evil tidings, which often make the things worse than really they are *Pfal. cxii. 7.* Or, (2.) To shew what imminent danger Jerusalem was in, when its enemies made so many bold advances towards it, and its friends could not make one bold stand to defend it. Note, The more daring the church's enemies are, and the more dastardly those are that should appear for her, the more will God be exalted in his own strength, when notwithstanding this he works deliverance for her.

3. How impotent his attempt upon Jerusalem shall be; *he shall remain at Nob*, when whence he may see mount Zion, and there he shall shake his hand against it, *ver. 32.* he shall threaten it, and that shall be all; it shall be safe, and shall set him at defiance; the daughter of Jerusalem, to be quits with him shall shake her head at him, *chap. xxxvii. 21.*

4. How fatal it would prove in the issue to himself; when he shake his hand at Jerusalem, and is about to lay hands on it, then is God's time to appear against him, for Zion the place of which God hath said, *This is my rest for ever*; therefore those who threaten it affront God himself; *Then the Lord shall lop the bow with terror, and cut down the thickets of the forest*, *ver. 33, 34.* (1.) The pride of the enemy shall be humbled, and the boughs that are lifted up on high shall be lopped off, the high and stately trees shall be hewn down, i. e. the haughty shall be humbled; those that lift up themselves in competition with God, or opposition to him, shall be abated. (2.) The power of the enemy shall be broken; the thickets of the forest he shall cut down: When the Assyrian soldiers were under their arms, and their spears erect, they looked like a forest, like Lebanon; but when in one night they all became as dead corpses, the pikes were laid on the ground, and Lebanon was of a sudden cut down by a mighty one, viz. the destroying angel, that in a little time slew so many thousands of them: and if this shall be the exit of that proud invader, let not God's people be afraid of him. *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?*

C H A P. XI.

*It is a very good transition in prophecy, (whether it be so in rhetoric or no) and a very common one, to pass from the prediction of the temporal deliverances of the church, to that of the great salvation, which in the fulness of time shall be wrought out by Jesus Christ, of which the others were types and figures, to which all the prophets bare witness: and so the ancient Jews understand them: For what else was it that raised so great an expectation of the Messiah at the time he came. Upon occasion of the prophecy of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, here comes in a prophecy concerning Messiah the prince: (1.) His rise out of the house of David, *ver. 1.* (2.) His qualifications for this great undertaking, *ver. 2, 3.* (3.) The justice and equity of his government, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* (4.) The peaceableness of his kingdom, *ver. 6—9.* (5.) The accession of the Gentiles to it, *ver. 10.* and with them the remnant of the Jews, that should be united with them in the Messiah's kingdom, *ver. 11—16.* And of all this, God would now shortly give them a type and some dark representation in the excellent government of Hezekiah, and the great peace which the nation should enjoy under him after the ruin of Sennacherib's design; and the return of many of the ten tribes out of their dispersion to their brethren of the land of Judah, when they enjoyed that great tranquillity.*

1. **A**ND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: 2. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the LORD; 3. And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. 6. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the sucking together; and a little child shall lead them. 7. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

The prophet had before in this sermon spoken of a child that should be born, a son that should be given, on whose shoulders the government should be; intending this for the comfort of the people of God in times of trouble, as dying Jacob many ages before had intended the prospect of Shiloh, for the comfort of his seed in their affliction in Egypt; He had said, *chap. x. 27.* that *the yoke should be destroyed because of the anointing*; now here he tells us on whom that anointing should rest. He foretels.

1. That the Messiah should, in due time, arise out of the house of David as that branch of the Lord, which he had said, *chap. iv. 2.* should be excellent and glorious; the word is *neuter*, which some think is referred to, *Matt. ii. 23.* where it is said to be spoken by the prophets of the Messiah, that he should be called a Nazarene. Observe here,

(1.) Whence this branch should arise; from Jesse: He should be the son of David, with whom the covenant of royalty was made; and to whom it was promised with an oath, that of the fruits of his loins God would raise up Christ, *Acts ii. 30.* David is often called the son of Jesse, and Christ is called so, because he was to be not only the son of David, but David himself, *Hof. iii. 5.*

(2.) The meanness of his appearance: (1.) He is called a rod and a branch, both the words here used, signify a weak, small, tender product, a twig, and a sprig; so some render them: such as is easily broken off: The enemies of God's church were just before compared to strong and stately boughs, *chap. x. 33.* which will not without great labour be hewn down; but Christ to a tender branch, *chap. liii. 2.* yet he shall be victorious over them. (2.) He is said to come out of Jesse, rather than David; because Jesse lived and died in meanness and obscurity; his family was of small account, *1 Sam. xviii. 18.* and it was in a way of contempt and reproach that David was sometimes called the son of Jesse, *chap. xxii. 7.* (3.) He comes forth out of the stem or stump of Jesse; when the royal family, that had been as a cedar, was cut down, and only the stump of it left, almost levelled with the ground, and lost in the grafs of the field, *Dan. iv. 15.* yet it shall sprout again, *Job xiv. 7.* Nay, it shall grow out of his roots that are quite buried in the earth, and like the roots of flowers in the winter have no stem appearing above ground. The house of David was reduced and brought very low at the time of Christ's birth; witness the obscurity and poverty of Joseph and Mary. The Messiah was thus to begin his estate of humiliation, for submitted to which he should be highly exalted, and would thus give early notice, that his kingdom was not of this world. The Chaldee paraphrase reads this, *There shall come forth a king from the son of Jesse, and the Messiah (or Christ) shall be anointed out of his son's sons.*

2. That he should be every way qualified for that great work, to which he was designed; that this tender branch should be so watered with the dew of heaven, as to become a strong rod for a sceptre to rule, *ver. 2.*

(1.) In general; *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him*: The holy Spirit in all his gifts and graces shall not only come, but rest and abide upon him; he shall have the Spirit not by measure, but without measure, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, *Col. i. 14.* and *ii. 9.* He begun his preaching with this, *Luke iv. 18.* *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.*

(2.) In particular; the spirit of government, by which he should be every way fitted for that judgment which the Father had committed to him, and given him authority to execute, *John v. 22—27.* And not only so, but should be made the fountain and treasury of all grace to believers, that from his fulness they might all receive the Spirit of grace, as all the members of the body derive animal Spirits from the head. (1.) He shall have the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and knowledge; he shall thoroughly understand the business he is to be employed in: *No man knows the father but the Son*, *Matt. xi. 27.* what he is to make known to the children of men concerning God, and his mind and will, he shall be himself acquainted with and apprized of, *John i. 18.* He shall know how to administer his spiritual kingdom in all the branches of it, so as effectually to answer the two great intentions of it, the glory of God, and the welfare of the children of men; the terms of the covenant shall be settled by him, and ordinances instituted in wisdom; treasures of wisdom shall be hid in him; he shall be our counsellor, and shall be made of God to us wisdom. (2.) The spirit of courage, or, might, or fortitude; the undertaking was very great, abundance of difficulty must be broken through, and therefore it was necessary he should be so spirited as that he might not fail or be discouraged, *Ia. xlii. 1.* He was famed for courage in his teaching the way, the way of God, in truth, and not caring for any man *Matt. xxii. 16.* (3.) The spirit of religion, or the fear of the Lord; not only he shall himself have a reverend affection for his Father, as his servant, *chap. xlii. 1.* and he was heard in that he feared, *Heb. v. 7.* but he shall have a zeal for religion, and shall design the advancement of that in his whole undertaking: Our faith in Christ was never designed to supersede and juggle out, but to increase and support our fear of the Lord.

3. That he should be accurate, and critical, and very exact in the administration of his government, and the exercise of the power committed to him, *ver. 3.* the spirit wherewith he shall be clothed shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, of an acute smell or scent, so the word is; for the apprehensions of the mind are often expressed by the sensations of the body. Note, 1. Those are most truly and valuably intelligent, that are so in the fear of the Lord, in the business of religion, for that is both the foundation and top-stone of wisdom. 2. By this it will appear that we have the spirit of God, if we have spiritual senses exercised, and are of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; those have divine illumination that know their duty, and know how to go about it. 3. Therefore Jesus Christ had the spirit without measure, that he might perfectly understand his undertaking! and he did so, as appears not only in the admirable answers he gave to all that questioned with him, which spoke him to be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, but in the management of his whole undertaking; He hath settled the great affair of religion so unexceptionably well, so as effectually to secure both God's honour and man's happiness, that it must be owned he thoroughly understood it.

4. That he should be just and righteous in all the acts of his government, and there should appear in it as much equity as wisdom: He shall judge, as he expresseth it himself, and as he himself would be judged of, *John vii. 24.*

(1.) Not according to outward appearance, *ver. 3.* *He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes*, with respect of persons, *Job xxxiv. 19.* and according to outward shews and appearances, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears, by common fame and report, and the representations of others, as men use to do; nor doth he judge of men by the fair words they speak, calling him Lord, Lord, or their plausible actions before the eye of the world, which they do to be seen of men; but he will judge by the hidden man of the heart, and the inward principles men are governed by, which he is an infallible witness of. Christ will judge the secrets of men, *Rom. ii. 16.* will determine concerning them, not according to their own pretensions and appearances, that were to judge after the sight of the eyes; not according to the opinion others have of them, that were to judge after the hearing of the ears; but we are sure that his judgment is according to truth.

(2.) But he will judge righteous judgment, *ver. 5.* *Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins*; he shall be righteous in the administration of his government, and his righteousness shall be his girdle, i. e. it shall constantly compass him and cleave to him, it shall be his ornament and honour; he shall gird himself for every action, shall gird on his sword for war in righteousness; his righteousness shall be his strength, and shall make him expeditious in his undertakings, as a man with his loins girt. In conformity to Christ

Christ, his followers must have the girdle of truth, *Eph. vi. 14.* and it will be the stability of the times. Particularly.

1. He shall in righteousness plead for the people that are poor and oppressed; he will be their protector, *ver. 4.* with *righteousness shall he judge the poor*; shall judge in favour and defence of those that have right on their side, though they are poor in the world, and because they are poor in spirit. It is the duty of princes to defend and deliver the poor, *Psal. lxxxii. 3, 4.* and the honour of Christ that he is the poor man's king, *Psal. lxxii. 2—4.* He shall *debate with evildoers for the meek of the earth*, or of the land; those that bear the injuries done them with meekness and patience, are in a special manner intitled to the divine care and protection; *I as a deaf man heard not, for thou wilt hear, Psal. xxxviii. 13, 14.* Some read it, *He shall reprove or correct the meek of the earth with equity*: If his own people, the meek of the land do amiss, he will visit their transgressions with a rod.

2. He shall in righteousness plead against his enemies that are proud and oppressors, *ver. 4.* But he shall smite the earth, the man of the earth that doth oppress; see *Psal. x. 18.* the men of the world, that mind earthly things only, *Psal. xvii. 14.* these he shall smite with the rod of his mouth, i. e. the word of his mouth, speaking terror and ruin to them, his threatenings shall take hold of them, and be executed upon them; *with the breath of his lips*, by the operation of his Spirit, according to the word and working, with and by it he shall *slay the wicked*: He will do it easily, with a word's speaking, as he laid those flat who came to seize him, by saying, *I am he*, *John xviii. 6.* Killing terrors shall arrest their consciences, killing judgments shall ruin them, their power, and all their interests; and in the other world everlasting tribulation will be recompensed to those that trouble his poor people. The apostle applies this to the destruction of the man of sin, whom he calls *that wicked one*, *2 Thess. ii. 1.* whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth: And the Chaldee here reads it, *He shall slay that wicked Romulus*, or Rome, as Mr. Hugh Broughton understands it.

3. That there should be great peace and tranquillity under his government: this is an explication of what was said, *chap. ix. 6.* that he should be the prince of peace. Peace signifies two things:

1. Unity and concord; and that is intimated in these figurative promises, that even the wolf shall dwell peaceably with the lamb; men of the most fierce and furious dispositions, that used to bite and devour all about them, shall have their temper so strangely altered by the efficacy of the gospel and grace of Christ, that they shall live in love even with the weakest, and such as formerly they would have made an easy prey of: So far shall the sheep be from hurting one another, as sometimes they have done, *Ezek. xxxiv. 20, 21.* that even the wolves shall agree with them. Christ, who is our peace, came to slay all enmities, and to settle lasting friendships among his followers, particularly between Jews and Gentiles; when multitudes of both, being converted to the faith of Christ, united in one sheep-fold, then the wolf and the lamb dwelt together; the wolf did not so much as threaten the lamb, nor was the lamb afraid of the wolf: The leopard shall not only not tear the kid, but shall lie down with her; even their young ones shall lie down together, and shall be trained up in a blessed amity, in order to the perpetuating of it: The lion shall cease to be ravenous, and shall *eat straw like the ox*, as some think all the beasts of prey did before the fall. The asp and the cockatrice shall cease to be venomous, so that parents shall let their children to play with them, and put their hands among them; A generation of vipers shall become a seed of saints, and the old complaint of *homo homini lupus* shall be at an end. They that inhabit the holy mountain shall live as amicably as the creatures did that were with Noah in the ark, and it shall be a means of their preservation, for they shall not hurt or destroy one another as they have done. Now, (1.) This is fulfilled in the wonderful effect of the gospel upon the minds of those that sincerely embrace it; it changes the nature, and makes those that trample on the meek of the earth, not only meek like them, but loving to them: When Paul that had persecuted the saints joined himself to them, then the wolf dwelt with the lamb. (2.) Some are willing to hope, it shall yet have a further accomplishment in the latter days, when *swords shall be beaten into ploughshares*.

2. Safety and security; Christ the great Shepherd shall take such care of his flock, that those who would hurt them shall not; they shall not only not destroy one another, but no enemy from without shall be permitted to give them any molestation; the property of troubles, and of death itself shall be so altered, that they shall not do any real hurt to, much less shall they be the destruction of, any that have their conversation in the holy mountain, *1 Pet. iii. 13.* who or what can harm us, *if we be followers of him that is good*? God's people shall be delivered not only from evil, but from the fear of it, even the suckling child shall without any terror play upon the hole of the asp; blessed Paul doth so when he saith, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* and *O death, where is thy sting?*

Lastly, Observe what shall be the effect, and what the cause of this wonderful softening and sweetening of men's tempers by the grace of God.

1. The effect of it shall be tractableness, and a willingness to receive instruction: *A little child shall lead them*, who formerly scorned to be controlled by the strongest man. Calvin understands it of their willing submission to the ministers of Christ who are to instruct with meekness, and not use any coercive power, but to be as little children, *Mat. xviii. 3.* See *2 Cor. viii. 5.*

2. The cause of it shall be the knowledge of God: The more there is of that, the more there is of a disposition to peace. They shall thus live in love, *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord*, which shall extinguish men's heats and animosities. The better acquainted we are with the God of love, the more shall we be changed into the same image, and the better affected shall we be to all those that bear his image. The earth shall be as full of his knowledge, as the channels of the sea are with water; so broad and extensive shall this knowledge be, and so far shall it spread; and so deep and substantial shall this knowledge be, and so long shall it last. There is much more of the knowledge of God to be got by the gospel of Christ, than could be got by the law of Moses; and whereas then in Judah only was God known, now *all shall know him*, *Heb. viii. 11.* But that is knowledge falsely so called, which sows discord among men; the right knowledge of God settles peace:

10. ¶ And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. 11. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. 12.

And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the out-casts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. 13. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. 14. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines towards the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. 15. And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall finite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry shod. 13. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

We have here a further prophecy of the enlargement and advancement of the kingdom of the Messiah, under the type and figure of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah in the latter end of Hezekiah's reign, after the defeat of Sennacherib.

1. This prediction was in part accomplished, when the great things God did for Hezekiah and his people proved as an ensign, inviting the neighbouring nations to them, to inquire of the wonders done in the land, on which errand the king of Babylon's ambassadors came. To them the Gentiles fought, and Jerusalem, the rest or habitation of the Jews, was then glorious, *ver. 10.* Then many of the Israelites that belonged to the kingdom of the ten tribes, who, upon the destruction of that kingdom by the king of Assyria, were forced to flee for shelter into all the countries about, and to some that lay very remote, even to the islands of the sea, were encouraged to return to their own country, and put themselves under the protection and government of the king of Judah; the rather, because it was an Assyrian army by which their country had been ruined, and that was now routed. This is said to be a recovery of them the second time, *ver. 11.* Such an instance of the power and goodness of God, and such a reviving to them, as their first deliverance out of Egypt was. Then the out-casts of Israel should be gathered in and brought home, and those of Judah too, who upon the approach of the Assyrian army shifted for their own safety. Then the old feud between Ephraim and Judah shall be forgotten, and they shall join against the Philistines and other their common enemies, *ver. 13, 14.* Note, Those who have been sharers with each other in afflictions and mercies, dangers and deliverances, in consideration thereof ought to unite for their joint and mutual safety and protection: And then it is likely to be well with the church, when Ephraim and Judah are one against the Philistines. Then whatever difficulties there may be in the way of their return of the dispersed, the Lord shall find out some way or other to remove them, as when he brought Israel out of Egypt he dried up the Red-sea and Jordan, *ver. 15.* and led them to Canaan through the invincible embarrassments of a vast howling wilderness, *ver. 16.* The like will he do this second time, or that which shall be equivalent; when God's time is come for the deliverance of his people, mountains of opposition shall become plain before him. Let us not despair therefore when the interests of the church seem to be brought very low; God can soon turn gloomy days into glorious ones.

2. It had a further reference to the days of the Messiah, and the accession of the Gentiles to his kingdom: for that the apostle applies, *ver. 10.* of which the following verses are a continuation, *Rom. xv. 12.* *There shall be a root of Jesse; and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust.* That is a key to this prophecy, which speaks of Christ as the root of Jesse; i. e. a branch out of his roots, *ver. 1.* *a root out of dry ground*, *chap. liii. 2.* He is the root of David, *Rev. v. 5.* the root and offspring of David, *Rev. xxii. 16.*

1. He shall stand, or be set up, for an ensign of the people; when he was crucified he was lifted up from the earth, that, as an ensign or beacon, he might draw the eyes and hearts of all men unto him, *John xii. 32.* He is set up as an ensign in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, in which the ministers, as standard-bearers, display the banner of his love, to allure us to him. *Cant. i. 4.* the banner of his truth under which we may lift ourselves, to engage in a holy war against sin and Satan. Christ is the ensign to whom the children of God that were scattered abroad are gathered together, *John xi. 52.* and in whom they meet as the center of their unity.

2. To him shall the Gentiles seek; we read of Greeks that did so, *John xii. 21.* *They would seek Jesus*; and upon that occasion Christ spoke of his being lifted up to draw all men to him. The apostle from the LXX. (or perhaps the LXX. from the apostle, in the editions after Christ) *Rom. xv. 12.* reads it, *In him shall the Gentiles trust*; they shall seek to him with a dependence on him.

3. His rest shall be glorious: Some understand it of the death of Christ, the triumphs of the cross made even that glorious: Others of his ascension, when he sat down to rest at the right hand of God: or rather, it is meant of the gospel-church, that mount Zion, of which Christ hath said, *This is my rest*; and in which he resides: this, though despised by the world, having upon it the beauty of holiness, is truly glorious: a glorious high throne, *Jer. xvii. 12.*

4. Both Jews and Gentiles shall be gathered to him, *ver. 11.* A remnant of both, a little remnant in comparison, which shall be recovered as it were with great difficulty and hazard: as formerly God delivered his people, and gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered, *Psal. cvi. 47.*—*Jer. xvi. 15, 16.* so he will a second time, in another way, by the powerful working of the Spirit of grace with the word. He shall set his hand to do it; i. e. he shall exert his power, the arm of the Lord shall be revealed to do it. (1.) There shall be a remnant of the Jews gathered in. The out-casts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah, *ver. 12.* who at the time of the bringing of them in to Christ, were many of them Jews of the dispersion, the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad, *James i. 1.*—*1 Pet. i. 1.* these shall flock to Christ, and probably more of those scattered Jews were brought into the church in proportion, than of those which remained in their own land. (2.) Many of the nations, the Gentiles, shall be brought in by the lifting up of the ensign. Jacob foretold concerning Shiloh, that to him should the gathering of the people be. Those that were strangers and foreigners, shall be made nigh. The Jews were jealous of Christ's going to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and of his teaching of the Gentiles, *John vii. 35.*

5. There shall be a happy accommodation between Judah and Ephraim, and both shall be safe from their adversaries, and have dominion over them, *ver.*

ver. 13, 14. The coalescence between Judah and Israel, at that time, was a type and figure of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church, who had been so long at variance. *The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel*, Jer. iii. 18. and become *one nation*, Ezek. xxxvii. 22. so the Jews and Gentiles are made of *twain one new man*, Eph. ii. 15. And being at peace one with another, those that are adversaries to them both shall be cut off; for *they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines*, as an eagle strikes at her prey, shall spoil them on the west-side of them: and then they shall extend their conquests eastward, over the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites; i. e. the gospel of Christ shall be successful in all parts, and some of all nations shall become obedient to the faith.

Lastly, Every thing that might hinder the progress and success of the gospel shall be taken out of the way: as when God brought Israel out of Egypt, he dried up the Red-sea and Jordan before them, *Isa. lxiii. 11, 12.* and as afterwards when he brought up the Jews out of Babylon, he *prepared them their way*, *Isa. lxii. 10.* so when Jews and Gentiles are to be brought together into the gospel-church, all obstruction shall be removed, (*ver. 15, 16.*) difficulties that seemed insuperable, shall be strangely got over; *the blind shall be led by a way that they know not*: See *chap. xlii. 15, 16.*—*xliii. 19, 20.* Converts shall be brought in chariots and in litters, *chap. lvi. 20.* Some think it is the farther accession of multitudes to the church, that is pointed at in that obscure prophecy of the drying up of the river Euphrates, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared, *Rev. xvi. 12.* which seems to refer to this here. Note, When God's time is come for the bringing of nations, or particular persons home to himself, divine grace will be victorious over all opposition. At the presence of the Lord the sea shall flee, and Jordan shall be driven back: and those who set their faces heaven-ward, will find there are no such difficulties in the way as they thought there was, for there is highway thither, *Isa. xxxv. 8.*

C H A P. XII.

The salvation promised in the foregoing chapter was compared to that of Israel, in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt; so that chapter ends. Now as then Moses and the children of Israel sang a song of praise to the glory of God, Exod. xv. 1. so shall the people of God do in that day, when the root of Jesse shall stand for an ensign of the people, and shall be the desire and joy of all nations. In that day. (1.) Every particular believer shall sing a song of praise for his own interest in that salvation, ver. 1, 2, 3. Thou shalt say, Lord, I will praise thee: thanksgiving-work shall be closet-work. (2.) Many in concert shall join in praising God for the common benefit arising from his salvation, ver. 4, 5, 6. Ye shall say, praise ye the Lord; thanksgiving-work shall be congregation-work: and the praises of God shall be publickly sung in the congregation of the upright.

1. **A**ND in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedest me. 2. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. 3. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

This is the former part of the hymn of praise which is prepared for the use of the church, of the Jewish church, when God would work great deliverances for them; and of the Christian church, when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up in the world in despite of the opposition of the powers of darkness: in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee. The scattered church being united into one body, shall as one man, with one mind and one mouth, thus praise God, who is one and his name one. In that day when the Lord shall do these great things for thee, thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee. That is,

3. Thou shalt have cause to say so: the promise is sure, and the blessings contained in it are very rich; and when they are bestowed, will furnish the church with abundant matter for rejoicing, and therefore with abundant matter for thanksgiving. The Old Testament prophecies of gospel-times are often expressed by the joy and praise that shall then be; for the inestimable benefits we enjoy by Jesus Christ require the most elevated and enlarged thanksgivings.

2. Thou shalt have a heart to say so. All God's other gifts to his people shall be crowned with this; he will give them grace to ascribe all the glory of them to him, and to speak of them upon all occasions with thankfulness to his praise. *Thou shalt say, i. e. thou oughtest to say so. In that day,* when many are brought home to Jesus Christ, and flock to him as doves to their windows, instead of envying the kind reception they find with Christ, as the Jews grudged the favour shewed to the Gentiles, *thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee.* Note, We ought to rejoice in and give thanks for the grace of God to others as well as to ourselves.

1. Believers are here taught to give thanks to God for the turning away of his displeasure from them, and the return of his favour to them, *ver. 1.* O Lord, I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me. Note, Even God's frowns must not put us out of time for praising him; though he be angry with us, though he slay us, yet we must put our trust in him and give him thanks. God has often just cause to be angry with us, but we have never any reason to be angry with him, nor to speak otherwise than well of him; even when he blames us, we must praise him: *thou wast angry with us, but thine anger is turned away.* Note, 1. God is sometimes angry with his own people, and the fruits of his anger do appear, and they ought to take notice of it, that they may humble themselves under his mighty hand. 2. Though God may for a time be angry with his people, yet his anger shall at length be turned away; it endures but for a moment, nor will he contend for ever: by Jesus Christ, the root of Jesse, God's anger against mankind was turned away, for he is our peace. 3. Those whom God is reconciled to be comforts; even the turning away of his anger is a comfort to them; yet that is not all, they that are at peace with God may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, *Rom. v. 1, 2.* Nay, God sometimes bring his people into a wilderness, that there he may speak comfortably to them, *Hosea ii. 14.* 4. The turning away of God's anger, and the return of his comforts to us, ought to be the matter of our joyful, thankful praises.

2. They are taught to triumph in God, and their interest in him, *ver. 2.* Behold and wonder, God is my salvation; not only my Saviour, by whom I am saved; but my salvation, in whom I am safe. I depend upon him as

my salvation, for I have found him to be so. He shall have the glory of all the salvation that have been wrought for me, and from him only will I expect the salvations I farther need, and not from hills and mountains: and if God be my salvation, if he undertake my eternal salvation, I will trust in him to prepare me for it and preserve me to it. I will trust him with all my temporal concerns, not doubting but he will make all to work for my good. I will be confident, i. e. I will be always easy in my own mind. Note, Those that have God for their salvation, may enjoy themselves with a holy security and serenity of mind; let faith in God as our salvation be effectual. (1.) To silence our fears, we must trust and not be afraid; not be afraid that the God we trust in will fail us; no, there is no danger of that; not be afraid of any creature, though never so formidable: and threatening. Note, Faith in God is a sovereign remedy against disquieting, tormenting fears. (2.) To support our hopes; is the Lord Jehovah our salvation? then he will be our strength and song. We have work to do and temptations to resist, and we may depend upon him to enable us for both; to *strengthen us with all might by his Spirit in the inner man*, for he is our strength; his grace is so, and that grace shall be sufficient for us. We have many troubles to undergo, and must express griefs in a vale of tears; and we may depend upon him to comfort us all in our tribulations, for he is our song, he *giveth songs in the night.* If we make of God our strength, and put our confidence in him, he will be our strength, if we make him our song and place our comfort in him, he will be our song. Many good Christians have God for their strength, who have him not for their song, they walk in darkness, but light is sown for them; and they that have God for their strength ought to make him their song; that is, to give him the glory of it? see *Psal. lxxviii. 35.* and to take to themselves the comfort of it, for he will become their salvation. Observe the title here given to God. Jah, Jehovah; Jah is the contraction of Jehovah, and both signify his eternity and unchangeableness; which are a great comfort to those that depend upon him as their strength and their song. Some make Jah to signify the Son of God made man; he is Jehovah; and in him we may glorify as our strength, and song, and salvation.

3. They are taught to derive comfort to themselves from the love of God, and all the tokens of that love, *ver. 3.* Therefore, because the Lord Jehovah is our strength and song, and will be your salvation, you shall draw water with joy. Note, The assurances God hath given us of his love, and the experiences we have had of the benefit and comfort of his grace, should greatly encourage our faith in him and our expectations from him: *Out of the wells of salvation in God, who is the fountain of all good to his people, you shall draw water with joy*: God's favour shall flow forth to you, and you shall have the comfort of it, and make use of the blessed fruits of it. Note, 1. God's promise revealed, ratified, and given out to us in his ordinances, are wells of salvation, wells of the Saviour, so some read it; for in them the Saviour and salvation are made known to us and made over to us. 2. It is our duty by faith to draw water out of these wells, to take to ourselves the benefit and comfort that is treasured up for us in them, as those that acknowledge all our fresh springs to be there, and all our fresh streams to be thence, *Psal. lxxxvii. 7.* 3. Water is to be drawn out of the wells of salvation with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. It is the will of God that we should rejoice before him and rejoice in him, *Deut. xxvi. 11.* be joyful in his house of prayer, *Isa. lvi. 7.* and keep his feasts with gladness, *Acts ii. 46.*

4. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. 5. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. 6. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

This is the second part of this evangelical song, and to the same purpose with the former; there believers stir up themselves to praise God, here they invite and encourage one another to do it, and are contriving to spread his praise, and draw in others to join with them in it. Observe,

1. Who are here called upon to praise God, the inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem, whom God had in a particular manner protected from Sennacherib's violence, *ver. 6.* Those that have received distinguishing favours from God, ought to be most forward and zealous in praising of him. The gospel church is Zion, Christ is Zion's king; those that have a place and a name in that, should lay out themselves to diffuse the knowledge of Christ and to bring many to him. Thou inhabitant of Zion; the word is feminine, let the weaker sex be strong in the Lord, and out of their mouth shall praise be perfected.

2. How they must praise the Lord: (1.) By prayer call upon his name: as giving thanks for former mercy is a decent way of begging farther mercy, so begging farther mercy, is graciously accepted as a thankful acknowledgment of the mercies we have received. In calling upon God's name, we give unto him some of the glory that is due to his name as our powerful and bountiful benefactor. (2.) By preaching and writing we must not only speak to God, but speak to others concerning him; not only call upon his name, but (as the margin reads it) proclaim his name; let others know something more from us than they did before concerning God, and those things whereby he hath made himself known. Declare his doings; his counsels, so some read it: the work of redemption is according to the counsel of his will; and in that and other wonderful works that he hath done, we must take notice of his *thoughts which are to us-ward*, *Psal. xl. 5.* Declare these among the people; among the heathen, that they may be brought into communion with Israel and the God of Israel. When the apostles preached the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, then this scripture was fulfilled; that his doings shall be declared among the people; and that what he hath done shall be known in all the earth. (3.) By a gospel to yourselves, and publish it to others with huzzas and loud acclamations, as those that *shout for victory*, *Exod. xxxii. 18.* or for the coronation of a king, *Numb. xxiii. 21.*

3. For what they must praise the Lord: (1.) Because he hath glorified himself; remember it yourselves, and make mention of it to others, that his name is exalted; is become more illustrious and more conspicuous, and every good man rejoiceth in that. (2.) Because he hath magnified his people; he hath done excellent things for them, which make them look great and considerable. (3.) Because he is and will be great among them; great as the holy One, for he is glorious in holiness; therefore great because holy, true goodness is true greatness. Great as the Holy One of Israel, and in the midst of them; praised by them, *Psal. lxxvi. 1.* manifesting himself among them and appearing gloriously in their behalf. It is the honour and happiness of Israel, that the God that is in covenant with them and in the midst of them is infinitely great.

Hitherto the prophecies of this book were only concerning Judah and Israel, and Jerusalem specially: but now the prophet begins to look abroad and to read the doom of divers of the neighbouring states and kingdoms for he that is King of saints is also King of nations, and rules in the affairs of the children of men, as well as in those of his own children. But the nations to whom these prophecies do relate, were all such as the people of God were some way or other conversant and concerned with: such as had been kind or unkind to Israel, and accordingly God would deal with them either in favour of wrath; for the Lord's portion is his people, and to them he hath an eye in all the dispensations of his providence concerning those about them, Duet. xxxii. 8, 9. And the threatenings we find here against Babylon, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Tyre, &c. were intended for comfort to those in Israel that feared God, but were terrified and oppressed by those potent neighbours, and for startling to those among them that were wicked. If God would thus severely reckon with those for their sins that knew him not and made no profession of his name, how severe would he be with those that were called by his name, and yet live in rebellion against him? and perhaps the directing of particular prophecies to the neighbour nations, might invite some of those nations to the reading of the Jew's Bible, and so they might be brought to their religion. This chapter, and that which follows, contains what God had to say to Babylon and Babylon's king, who were at present little known to Israel, but would in process of time become a greater enemy to them than any other had been: for which God would at last reckon with them. In this chapter we have, (1.) A general rendezvous of the forces that were to be employed against Babylon, ver. 1—5. (2.) The dreadful bloody work that those forces should make in Babylon, ver. 6—18. (3.) The utter ruin and desolation of Babylon which this should end in, ver. 19—22.

1. THE burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. 2. Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. 3. I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. 4. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. 5. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

The general title of this book was, *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz*, chap. i. 1. This here is that which Isaiah did see, which was represented to his mind, as clearly and fully as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes: but the particular inscription of this sermon is, *the burden of Babylon*: (1.) It is a burden, a lesson they were to learn. So some understand it; but they would be loth to learn it, and it would be as a burden to their memories: or a load which should lie heavy upon them, and under which they should sink. Those that will not make the word of God their rest, (*Isa. xxviii. 12. Jer. vi. 16.*) it shall be made a burden to them. (2.) It is the burden of Babylon or Babel, which at this time was a dependant upon the Assyrian monarchy (the metropolis of which was Nineveh), but soon after revolted from it, and became a monarchy of itself, and a very potent one in Nebuchadnezzar. This prophet afterwards foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, *chap. xxxix. 6.* Here he foretells reprisals God would make upon Babylon for the wrongs done to his people.

In these verses summons are given to those powerful and warlike nations, whom God would make use of as the instruments of his wrath for the destruction of Babylon: he afterwards names them, *ver. 17.* the Medes, who in conjunction with the Persians under the command of Darius and Cyrus, were the ruin of the Babylonian monarchy.

1. The place doomed to destruction is Babylon; it is here called the *gates of the nobles*, *ver. 2.* because of the abundance of noblemen's houses that were in it; stately ones and richly furnished, which would invite the enemy to come in hopes of a rich booty. The gates of nobles were strong and well guarded, and yet they would be no fence against those who came with commission to execute God's judgments. Before his power and wrath, palaces are no more than cottages: nor it is only the gates of the nobles, but the whole land that is doomed to destruction, *ver. 5.* for though the nobles were the leaders in persecuting and oppressing God's people, yet the whole land concurred with them in it.

2. The persons brought together to lay Babylon waste are here called, (1.) *God's sanctified ones*, *ver. 3.* designed for this service, add set apart to it by the purpose and providence of God; disengaged from other projects, that they might wholly apply themselves to this; such as were qualified for that to which they were called; for that work God employs men in, he doth in some measure fit for them. It imitates likewise that in God's intention, though not in their's, it was a holy war; they designed only the enlargement of their own empire, but God designed the release of his people, and a type of the destruction of the New Testament Babylon. Cyrus, the person principally concerned, was justly called the sanctified one, for he was God's anointed, *chap. xlv. 1.* and a figure of him that was to come. It is a pity but all soldiers, especially those that fight the Lord's battles, should be in the strictest sense sanctified ones; and a wonder they dare to profane ones, who carry their lives in their hands. (2.) They are called *God's mighty ones*, because they had their might from God, and were now to use it for him. It is said of Cyrus, that in this expedition *God held his right hand*, *Isa. xlv. 1.* God's sanctified ones are his mighty ones: whom God calls, he qualifies; and whom he makes holy, he makes strong in spirit. (3.) They are said to rejoice in his highness, &c. to serve his glory and the purposes of it with great alacrity. Though Cyrus did not know God, nor actually design his honour in what he did, yet God used him as his servant; (*Isa. xlv. 1. I have surnamed thee as my servant, though thou hast not known me*) and he rejoiced in those successes by which God exalted his own name. (4.) They are very numerous; a multitude, a great people; *kingdoms of nations*, *ver. 4.* not rude and barbarous, but modelled and regular troops, such as used to be furnished out by well-ordered kingdoms; the great God hath hosts at his command. (5.) They are far fetched; they come from the end of heaven; the vast country of Assyria lay between Babylon and Persia. God can make those a scourge

and ruin to his enemies that lie most remote from them, and therefore are least dreaded.

3. The summons given them are effectual, their obedience ready, and they make a very formidable appearance: *A banner is lifted up upon the high mountain*, *ver. 2.* God's standard is set up, a flag of defiance hung out against Babylon. It is erected on high, where all may see it; whoever will may come and lift themselves under it, and they shall be taken immediately into God's pay. They that beat for volunteers, must exalt the voice in making proclamation to encourage soldiers to come in; they must shake the hand to beckon those at a distance, and to animate those that have lifted themselves. And they shall not do this in vain; God has commanded and called those whom he designs to make use of, *ver. 3.* and power goes along with his calls and commands, which cannot be resisted. He that makes man able to serve him, can when he pleaseth make them willing too: it is the *Lord of hosts that mustereth the hosts of the battle*, *ver. 4.* He raiseth them, brings them together, puts them in order, reviews them, has an exact account of them in his muster roll, sees that they be all in their respective posts, and gives them their necessary orders. Note, All the hosts of war are under the command of the Lord of hosts: and that which makes them truly formidable is, that when they come against Babylon, the Lord comes and brings them with him as the *weapons of his indignation*, *ver. 5.* Note, Great princes and armies are but tools in God's hand, weapons that he is pleased to make use of in doing his work, and it is his wrath that arms them and gives them success.

6. ¶ Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. 7. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: 8. And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrow shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. 9. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. 11. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. 12. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. 13. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. 14. And it shall be as the chafed roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land. 15. Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined unto them, shall fall by the sword. 16. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished. 17. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. 18. Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

We have here a very elegant and lively description of the terrible confusion and desolation, which should be made in Babylon by the descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon it. They that were now secure and easy, are bid to howl, and make sad lamentation: For, 1. God is about to appear in wrath against them, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands; *The day of the Lord is at hand*, *ver. 6.* a little day of judgment, when God will act as a just avenger of his own and his people's injured cause. And there are those who will have reason to tremble when that day is at hand; *the day of the Lord cometh*, *ver. 9.* Men have their day now, and they think to carry the day; but God laughs at them, for he sees that *his day is coming*, *Psal. xxxvii. 13.* Fory is not with God, and yet his day of reckoning with the Babylonians is said to be cruel with wrath and fierce anger; God will deal in severity with them for the severities they exercised upon God's people with the froward, with the cruel, he will shew himself froward, and will shew himself cruel, and give the blood-thirsty blood to drink.

2. Their hearts shall fail them, and they shall have neither courage nor comfort left them; shall not be able either to resist the judgment coming or to bear up under it, either to oppose the enemy or support themselves, *ver. 7, 8.* They that in the day of their peace were proud, and haughty, and terrible, *ver. 11.* when trouble comes are quite dispirited, and are at their wit's end; all hands shall be faint and unable to hold a weapon, and every man's heart shall melt; so that they shall be ready to die for fear. The pangs of their fear shall be like those of a woman in hard labour, and they shall be amazed one at another; in frightening themselves, they shall wonder to see those tremble that used to be bold and daring; or, they shall be amazed, looking one at another as men at a loss, *Gen. xlii. 1.* Their faces shall be as flames, pale as flames through fear, so some; or red as flames sometimes are, blushing at their own cowardice; or their faces shall be as faces scorched with the flame, or as their's that labour in the fire, their *visage blacker than a coal*; or like a *bottle in the smoke*, *Psal. cxix. 83.*

3. All comfort and hope shall fail them, *ver. 10.* *The stars of heaven shall not give their light*; but shall be clouded and over-cast, *the sun shall be darkened in his going forth*, rising bright but lost again, a certain sign of foul weather. They shall be as men in distress at sea, when neither sun nor stars appear, *Acts xxvii. 20.* It shall be as a dreadful time with them, as it would be with the earth, if all the heavenly luminaries were turned into darkness: a resemblance of the day of judgment, when the sun shall be turned into darkness. The heavens frowning thus, is an indication of the displeasure of the God of heaven, when things look dark on earth, yet it is well enough if all be clear upwards; but if we have no comfort thence, wherewith shall we be comforted?

4. God will visit them for their iniquity; and all this is intended for

the punishment of sin, and particularly the sin of pride, *ver. 11.* This puts wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery. (1.) That sin must now have its punishment; though Babylon be a little world, yet being a wicked world, it shall not go unpunished. Sins brings desolation on the world of the ungodly; and when the kingdoms of the earth are quarrelling with one another, it is the fruit of God's controversy with them all. (2.) That pride must now have its fall. The haughtiness of the terrible must now be laid low, particularly of Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar, who had their pride trampled upon, and made themselves very terrible to the people of God: *A man's pride will bring him low.*

5. There shall be so great a slaughter, as will produce a scarcity of men, *ver. 12. I will make a man more precious than fine gold.* You could not have a man to be employed in any of the affairs of state, not a man to be lifted into the army, not a man to match a daughter to for the building up of a family, if you would give any money for one. The troops of the neighbouring nations would not be hired into the service of the king of Babylon, because they saw every thing go against them. Populous countries are soon depopulated by war: And God can soon make a kingdom that has been courted and admired, to be dreaded and shunned by all, as a house that is falling, or a ship that is sinking.

6. There shall be an universal confusion and consternation: Such a confusion of their affairs, that it shall be like the *shaking of the heavens*, with dreadful thunders, and the removing of the earth, by no less dreadful earthquakes: All shall go to rack and ruin *in the day of the wrath of the Lord of Hosts*, *ver. 13.* And such a consternation shall seize their spirits, that Babylon, which used to be like a roaring lion and a ranging bear to all about her, shall become *as a chafed roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up*, *ver. 14.* The army they shall bring into the field, consisting of troops of divers nations (as great armies used to do) shall be so dispirited by their own fears, and so dispersed by their enemies' sword, that they shall *turn every man to his own people*, each man shall shift for his own safety; the *men of might shall not find their hands*, *Psalms lxxvi. 5.* but take to their heels.

7. There shall be a general scene of blood and horror, as useful to be where the sword devours: No wonder that every one makes the best of his way since the conqueror gives no quarter, but puts all to the sword, and not those only that are found in arms (as is usual with us even in the most cruel slaughters) *ver. 15. Every one that is found alive shall be run through*; as soon as ever it appears that he is a Babylonian: *Nay, because the sword devours one as well as another, every one that is joined to them shall fall by the sword*: those of other nations that come in to their assistance, shall be cut off with them. It is dangerous being in bad company, and helping those whom God is about to destroy; those particularly that join themselves to Babylon, must expect to share in her plagues, *Rev. xviii. 4.* And since the most sacred laws of nature, and humanity itself are silenced by the fury of war, (though they cannot be cancelled) the conquerors shall, in the most barbarous brutish manner, *dash the children to pieces, and ravish the wives*: *Jusque datum fuerit*; *ver. 16.* They had thus dealt with God's people, *Lam. v. 11.* and now they shall be paid in their own coin, *Rev. xiii. 10.* It was particularly foretold, *Psalms cxxxvii. 9.* that the *little ones of Babylon shall be dashed against the stones.* How cruel soever, and unjust they were that did it, God was righteous who suffered it to be done, and to be done before their eyes, to their greater terror and vexation. It was just also that the houses which they had filled with the spoil of Israel, should be spoiled and plundered. What is got by rapine, is often lost so.

1. The enemy that God would send against them should be inexorable, probably being by some provocation or other more than ordinarily exasperated against them: or however God himself will stir up the Medes to use this severity with the Babylonians; he will not only serve his own purposes by their dispositions and designs, but will put it into their hearts to make this attempt upon Babylon, and suffer them to persecute it with all this fury: God is not the author of sin, but he would not permit it if he did not know how to bring glory to himself out of it. These Medes, in conjunction with the Persians, shall make thorough work of it. For,

(1.) They shall take no tribes, *ver. 17.* All that men have they would give for their lives, but the *Medes shall not regard silver*; it is blood they thirst for, not gold, no man's riches shall with them be the ransom of his life.

(2.) They shall shew no pity, *ver. 11.* not to the young men that are in the prime of their time, they shall shoot them through with their bows, and then dash them to pieces; not to the age of innocence, *they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb, nor spare little children*, whose cries and frights one would think should make even marble eyes to weep, and hearts of adamant to relent. Pause a little here and wonder, (1.) That men should be thus cruel and inhuman, and so utterly divested of all compassion; and in it see how corrupt and degenerate the nature of man is become. (2.) That the God of infinite mercy should suffer it, nay, and should make it to be the execution of his justice; which shews that though he is gracious, yet he is the God to whom vengeance belongs. (3.) That little infants which have never been guilty of any actual sin, should be thus abused, which shews that there is an original guilt, by which life is forfeited as soon as it is had.

19. ¶ And Babylon the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. 20. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. 21. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. 22. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

The great havock and destruction which it was foretold should be made by the Medes and Persians in Babylon, here ends in the final destruction of it.

1. It is allowed that Babylon was a noble city, *it was the glory of kingdoms, and the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency*; *it was that head of gold*, *Dan. ii. 37, 38.* it was called the *lady of kingdoms*, *Isa. lxvii. 6.* the *praise of the whole earth*, *Jer. li. 41.* like a pleasant roe, (so the word signifies) but it shall be as a chafed roe, *ver. 14.* the Chaldeans gloried in the beauty and wealth of this their metropolis.

2. It is foretold that it should be wholly destroyed, like Sodom and Gomorrah; not so miraculously, nor so suddenly, but as effectually, though gradually; and the destruction should come upon them as that upon Sodom,

when they were secure, eating and drinking, *Luke xvii. 28.* Babylon was taken when Belshazzar was in his revels; and though Cyrus and Darius did not demolish it, yet by degrees it wasted away, and in process of time it went all to ruin. It is foretold here, *ver. 20. that it shall never be inhabited*; in Adrian's time nothing remained but the wall. And whereas it is prophesied concerning Nineveh that great city, and when it should be deserted and left desolate, yet flocks should lie down in the midst of it; it is here said concerning Babylon, that the Arabians that were shepherds, should not make their folds there; the country about should be so barren, that there would be no grazing, no, not for sheep there: nay, it shall be the receptacle of wild beasts, that affect solitude; the houses of Babylon, where the sons and daughters of pleasure used to rendezvous, shall be full of doleful creatures, owls and satyrs, that are themselves frightened thither, as to a place proper for them, and by whom all others are frightened thence. Historians say, this was fulfilled in the letter. Benjamin Bar Jona, in his Itinerary, speaking of Babel has these words: "This is that Babel which was of old thirty miles in breadth; it is now laid waste; there are yet to be seen the ruins of a palace of Nebuchadnezzar, but the sons of men dare not enter in, for fear of serpents and scorpions, which possess the place." Let none be proud of their pompous palaces, for they know not but they may become worse than cottages; nor let any think that *their houses shall endure for ever*, *Psalms xlix. 11.* when perhaps nothing may remain but the ruins and reproaches of them.

3. It is intimated that this destruction should come shortly, *ver. 22. Her time is near to come.* This prophecy of the destruction to Babylon was intended for the support and comfort of the people of God when they were captives there, and grievously oppressed: and the accomplishment of the prophecy was near two hundred years after the time when it was delivered: yet it followed soon after the time for which it was calculated; When the people of Israel were groaning under the heavy yoke of Babylonish tyranny, sitting down in tears by the rivers of Babylon, and upbraided with the songs of Zion, when their insolent oppressors were most haughty and arrogant, *ver. 11.* then let them know for their comfort, that Babylon's time, her day to fall, was near to come, and the days of her prosperity shall not be prolonged, as they have been; when God begins with her, he will make an end. Thus it is said of the destruction of the New Testament Babylon, whereof the former was a type; *In one hour is her judgment come.*

C H A P. XIV.

In this chapter, 1. More weight is added to the burden of Babylon, enough to sink it like a millstone; (1.) It is Israel's cause that is to be pleaded in this quarrel with Babylon, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) The king of Babylon for the time being shall be remarkably brought down and triumphed over, *ver. 4—20.* (3.) The whole race of the Babylonians should be cut off and extirpated, *ver. 21—23.* 2. A confirmation of the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was a thing at a distance, is here given in the prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian army that invaded the land, which happened not long after, *ver. 24—27.* 3. The success of Hezekiah against the Philistines is here foretold, and the advantages which his people would gain thereby, *ver. 28—32.*

1. **F**OR the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. 2. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD, for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors. 3. And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve.

This comes in here as the reason why Babylon must be overthrown and ruined; because God has mercy in store for his people, and therefore, (1.) The injuries done to them must be reckoned for, and revenged upon their persecutors. Mercy to Jacob will be wrath and ruin to Jacob's impenitent, implacable adversaries, such as Babylon was. (2.) The yoke of oppression which Babylon had long laid on their necks, must be broken off, and they must be set at liberty; and in order to this, the destruction of Babylon is as necessary as the destruction of Egypt and Pharaoh were to their deliverance out of that house of bondage. The same prediction is a promise to God's people, and a threatening to their enemies, as the same providence hath a bright side towards Israel, and a black and dark side towards the Egyptians.

Observe, 1. The ground of these favours to Jacob and Israel, the kindness God had for them, and the choice he had made of them, *ver. 1. The Lord will have mercy on Jacob*, the seed of Jacob, now captives in Babylon: he will make it to appear that he hath compassion on them, and has mercy in store for them; and that he will not contend for ever with them: and he will yet choose them, will yet again return to them, though he had seemed for a time to refuse and reject them; will shew that they are his chosen people, and that the election stands sure. However it may seem to us, God's mercy is not gone, nor doth his promise fail, *Psalms lxxvii. 8.*

2. The particular favours he designed them:

1. He would bring them back to their native soil and air again; the *Lord will set them in their own land*, out of which they were driven, a settlement in the Holy Land, the Land of Promise, is a fruit of God's mercy, distinguishing mercy.

2. Many should be profelyted to their holy religion, and should return with them, induced to do so by the manifest tokens of God's favourable presence with them, the operations of God's grace in them, and his providence for them. *Strangers shall be joined with them*, saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*, *Zech. viii. 23.* It adds much to the honour and strength of Israel, when strangers are joined with them, and there are added to the church many from without, *Acts ii. 47.* Let not the church's children be shy of strangers, but receive those whom God receives, and own those who cleave to the house of Jacob.

3. These profelytes should not only be a credit to their cause, but very helpful and very serviceable to them in their return home; the people among whom they live shall take them, take care of them, take pity on them, and shall bring them to their place, as friends, loth to part with such good company;

company; as servants, willing to do them all the good offices they could. God's people, wherever their lot is cast, should endeavour thus by all the instances of an exemplary and winning conversation, to gain an interest in the affections of those about them, and recommend religion to their good opinion. This was fulfilled in the return of the captives from Babylon, when all that were about them, pursuant to Cyrus's proclamation, contributed to their remove, *Ezra* i. 4—6. not as the Egyptians, because they were sick of them, but because they loved them.

4. They should have the benefit of their service when they were returned home, for many would of choice go with them in the meanest post, rather than not go with them; they shall *possess them in the land of the Lord, for servants and handmaids*; and as the laws of that land saved it from being the purgatory of servants, providing that they should not be oppressed, so the advantages of that land made it the paradise of those servants that had been strangers to the covenants of promise, for there was *one law to the stranger, and to them that were born in the land*. They whose lot is cast in the *land of the Lord, a land of light*, should take care that their servants and handmaids may share in the benefit of it; who will then find it better to be possessed in the Lord's land, than possessors in any other.

5. They should triumph over their enemies, and they that would not be reconciled to them, should be reduced and humbled by them; *They shall take them captives whose captives they were, and shall rule over their oppressors, righteously, but not revengefully*. The Jews perhaps bought Babylonian prisoners out of the hands of the Medes and Persians, and made slaves of them; or this might have its accomplishment in their victories over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees. It is applicable to the success of the gospel, when those were brought into obedience to it, that had made the greatest opposition to it, as Paul; and to the interest believers have in Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, when he led captivity captive, the power they gain over their own corruptions, and the dominion the upright shall have in the morning, *Psal.* xlix. 14.

6. They should see a happy period of all their grievances, *ver. 3. The Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow and thy fear, and from the hard bondage*. God himself undertakes to work a blessed change; (1.) In their state, they shall have rest from their bondage; the days of their affliction, though many, shall have an end; and the rod of the wicked, though it lie long, shall not always lie on their lot. (2.) In their spirit; they shall have rest from their sorrow and fear, sense of their present burdens, and dread of worse; sometimes fear puts the soul into a toils as much as sorrow doth, and those must needs feel themselves very easy, to whom God hath given rest from both. They that are freed from the bondage of sin, have a foundation laid for true rest from sorrow and fear.

4. ¶ That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! 5. The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. 6. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. 7. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. 8. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. 9. Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. 10. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? 11. Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. 12. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13. For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. 15. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. 16. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; 17. That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? 18. All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. 19. But thou art cast out of thy grave, like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet. 20. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evil doers shall never be renowned. 21. Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities: 22. For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the LORD. 23. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will also sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts.

The kings of Babylon successively were the great enemies and oppressors of God's people, and therefore in the destruction of Babylon, the fall of the king, and the ruin of his family, is here particularly taken notice of and

triumphed in: In the day that God has given Israel rest, they shall take up this proverb against the king of Babylon. We must not rejoice when our enemy falls, as our's; but when Babylon, the common enemy of God and his Israel sinks, then rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, *Rev.* xvii. 20. The Babylonian monarchy bid fair to be an absolute, universal, and perpetual one, and in these pretensions vied with the Almighty; it is therefore very justly, not only brought down, but insulted over when it is down; and it is not only the last monarch, Belshazzar, who was slain on that night that Babylon was taken, *Dan.* v. 30. who is here triumphed over, but the whole monarchy, which sunk in him; not without special reference to Nebuchadnezzar, in whom that monarchy was at its height. Now here,

1. The fall of the king of Babylon is rejoiced in; and a most curious, elegant, compofure is here prepared, not to adorn his heart or monument, but to expose his memory, and fix a lasting brand of infamy upon it: It gives us an account of the life and death of this mighty monarch, how he went down slain to the pit, though he had been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, *Ezek.* xxxii. 27.

In this parable we may observe,

1. The prodigious height of wealth and power to which this monarch and monarchy arrived. Babylon was a golden city, *ver. 4.* it is a Chaldean word in the original, which intimates that she used to call herself so, so much did she abound in riches, and excel all other cities, as gold doth all other metals: She is gold-thirty, or an exactress of gold, so some read it; for how do men get wealth to themselves, but by squeezing it out of others? The New Jerusalem is the only truly golden city, *Rev.* xxi. 18—21. The king of Babylon having so much wealth in his dominions, and the absolute command of it, by the help of that ruled the nations, *ver. 6.* gave them law, and read them their doom; and at his pleasure weakened the nations, *ver. 12.* that they might not be able to make head against him: Such vast victorious armies did he bring into the field, that which way soever he looked he made the earth to tremble, and shook kingdoms, *ver. 16.* all his neighbours were afraid of him, and were forced to trundle to him. No one man could do this by his own personal strength, but by the numbers he has at his beck. Great tyrants by making some do what they will, make others suffer what they will: How piteous is the case of mankind, which thus seems to be in a combination against itself, and its own rights and liberties, which could not be ruined but by its own strength.

2. The wretched abuse of all this wealth and power, which the king of Babylon was guilty of, in two instances:

(1.) Great oppression and cruelty; he is known by the name of the oppressor, *ver. 4.* he hath the sceptre of the rulers, *ver. 6.* hath the command of all the princes about him, but it is the staff of the wicked; a staff with which he supports himself in his wickedness, and wickedly strikes all about him: He smote the people, not in justice for their correction and reformation, but in wrath, *ver. 6.* to gratify his own peevish resentments, and that with a continual stroke, pursued them with his forces, and gave them no respite, no breathing time, no cessation of arms: He ruled the nations, but he ruled them in anger, every thing he said and did was in passion; so that he who had the government of all about him, had no government of himself; he made the world as a wilderness, as if he had taken a pride in being the plague of his generation, and a curse to mankind, *ver. 17.* Great princes used to glory in building cities, but he gloried in destroying them, see *Psal.* ix. 6.

Two particular instances are here given of his tyranny, worse than all the rest: (1.) That he was severe to his captives, *ver. 17.* he opened not the house of his prisoners; he did not let them loose homewards, so the margin reads it; he kept them in close confinement, and never would suffer any to return to their own land: This refers especially to the people of the Jews, and it is that which fills up the measure of the king of Babylon's iniquity, that he had detained the people of God in captivity, and would by no means release them; nay, by profaning the vessels of God's temple at Jerusalem, did in effect say, they should never return to their former use, *Dan.* v. 2, 3. For this he was presently and justly turned out by one, who the first thing he did opened the house of God's prisoners, and sent home the temple vessels. (2.) That he was oppressive to his own subjects, *ver. 20.* Thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people; and what did he get by that, when the wealth of the land, and the multitude of his people, is the strength and honour of the prince, who never rules so safely, so gloriously, as in the hearts and affections of the people? But tyrants sacrifice their interests to their lusts and passions; and God will reckon with them for their barbarous usage of those that are under their power, whom they think they may use as they please.

(2.) Great pride and haughtiness; notice is here taken of his pomp, the extravagancy of his retinue, *ver. 11.* he affected to appear in the utmost magnificence; but that was not the worst, it was the temper of his mind, and the elevation of that, that ripened him for ruin, *ver. 13, 14.* Thou hast said in thine heart, like Lucifer, I will ascend into heaven: Here is the language of his vain-glory, borrowed perhaps from that of the angels that fell, who, not content with their first estate, the post assigned them, would vie with God, and become not only independent on him, but equal with him: or perhaps it refers to the story of Nebuchadnezzar, who when he would be more than a man, was justly turned into a brute, *Dan.* iv. 30. The king of Babylon here promiseth himself; (1.) That in pomp and power he shall quite over-top all his neighbours, and shall arrive to the very height of earthly glory and felicity, that he shall be as great and happy as this world can make him; that is the heaven of a carnal heart, and to that he hopes to ascend, and to be as far above those about him, as the heaven is above the earth. Princes are the stars of God, which give some light to this dark world, *Matt.* xxiv. 29. but he will exalt his throne above them all. (2.) That he shall particularly insult over God's mount Zion, which Belshazzar, in his last drunken frolic, seemed to have had a spite to in a special manner, when he called for the vessels of the temple at Jerusalem to profane them, see *Dan.* v. 2. In the same humour he here said, I will sit upon the mount of the congregation (it is the same word that is used for the holy convocations) in the sides of the north, so mount Zion is said to be situated, *Psal.* xlviii. 2. Perhaps Belshazzar was projecting an expedition to Jerusalem, to triumph in the ruins of it, then when God cut him off. (3.) That he shall vie with the God of Israel, of whom he had indeed heard gloriously, that he had his residence above the heights of the clouds, but thither, saith he, will I ascend, and be as great as he; I will be like him whom they call the most High. It is a gracious ambition to covet to be like the most Holy, for he hath said, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*; but it is a sinful ambition to aim to be like the most High, for he hath said, that he that exalteth himself shall be abased; and the devil drew our first parents in to eat forbidden fruit, by promising them that they should be as gods. (4.) That he shall himself be deified after his death, as some of the first founders of the Assyrian monarchy were, and stars had even their names from them; but (saith he) I will exalt my throne above them all: Such as this was his pride, which was the undoubted omen of his destruction.

3. The utter ruin that should be brought upon him:

(1.) It

(1.) It is foretold that his wealth and power should be broken, and a final period put to his pomp and pleasure; he hath long been an oppressor, but he shall cease to be so, *ver. 4.* Had he ceased to be so by true repentance and reformation, according to the advice Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar, it might have been a lengthening of his life and tranquillity: But those that will not cease to sin, God will make them cease. The golden city, that one would have thought might have continued for ever, is ceased; there is an end of that Babylon. The Lord, the righteous God, hath broken the staff of that wicked prince, broken it over his head, in token of the divesting him of his office; God hath taken his power from him, and disabled him to do any more mischief: He has broken the sceptres, for even those are brittle things, soon broken, and often justly.

(2.) That he himself should be seized; *He is persecuted, ver. 6.* violent hands are laid upon him, and none hindereth. It is the common fate of tyrants, when they fall into the power of their enemies to be deserted by their flatterers, whom they took for their friends. We read of another enemy like this here, of whom it is foretold, that *he shall come to his end, and none shall help him, Dan. xi. 8.* Tiberius and Nero thus saw themselves abandoned.

(3.) That he should be slain, and go down to the congregation of the dead, to be free among them, as the slain that are no more remembered, *Psal. lxxxviii. 5.* he shall be weak as the dead are, and like unto them, *ver. 10.* His pomp is brought down to the grave, i. e. it perisheth with him; the pomp of his life shall not as usual end in a funeral pomp. True glory, that is, true grace, will go up with the soul to heaven, but vain pomp will go down with the body to the grave, there is an end of it: The noise of his viol is now heard no more; death is a farewell to the pleasures, as well as to the pomps of this world. This mighty prince, that used to lie on a bed of down, and tread upon rich carpets, and to have coverings and canopies exquisitely fine, now shall have the worms spread under him, and the worms covering him, *ver. 11.* worms bred out of his own putrified body, which though he fancied himself a god, proved him to be made of the same mould with other men. When we are pampering and decking our bodies, it is good to remember they will be worms'-meat shortly.

(4.) That he should not have the honour of a burial, much less of a decent one, and in the sepulchres of his ancestors; *the kings of the nations lie in glory, ver. 18.* either the dead bodies themselves, so embalmed as to be preserved from putrefaction, as of old among the Egyptians; or their effigies (as with us) erected over their graves: Thus, as if they would defy the ignominy of death, they lay in a poor, faint sort of glory, *every one in his own house, i. e. his own burying-place,* for the grave is the house appointed for all living, a sleeping house, where the busy and troublesome will lie quiet, and the troubled and weary lie at rest: But this king of Babylon is cast out, and has no grave, *ver. 19.* his dead body is thrown, like that of a beast, into the next ditch, or upon the next dunghill, like an abominable branch of some noxious, poisonous plant, which nobody will touch: or as the clothes of malefactors put to death, and by the hand of justice thrust through with a sword, and on whose dead bodies heaps of stones are railed, or they are thrown into some deep quarry, among the stones of the pit. Nay, the king of Babylon's dead body shall be as the carcases of those who are slain in battle, that are trodden under feet by the horses and soldiers, and crushed to pieces; *Thus he shall not be joined with his ancestors in burial, ver. 20.* To be denied decent burial is a disgrace, which if it be inflicted for righteousness' sake, as *Psal. lxxix. 2.* may as other such reproaches be rejoiced in, *Matt. v. 12.* it is the lot of the two witnesses, *Rev. xi. 9.* But if, as here, it be the just punishment of iniquity, it is an intimation that evil pursues impenitent sinners beyond death, greater evil than that, and that they shall rise to everlasting shame and contempt.

4. The many triumphs that should be in his fall.

1. Those whom he had been a great tyrant and terror to, will be glad that they are rid of him, *ver. 7, 8.* Now he is gone the whole earth is at rest, and is quiet, for he was the great disturber of the peace; now they all break forth into singing, for when the wicked perish there is shouting, *Prov. xi. 10.* the fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon now think themselves safe, there is no danger now of their being cut down to make way for his vast armies, or to furnish him with timber. The neighbouring princes, and great men, who are compared to fir-trees and cedars, *Zech. xi. 2.* may now be easy and out of fear of being dispossessed of their rights, for the hammer of the whole earth is cut asunder and broken, *Jer. i. 23.* the ax that boasted itself against him that hewed with it, *Isa. x. 15.*

2. The congregation of the dead will bid him welcome to them, especially those whom he had barbarously hastened thither, *ver. 9, 10.* Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming, and to compliment thee upon thy arrival into their dark and dreadful regions: The chief ones of the earth, who when they were alive were kept in awe by him, and durst not come near him, but rose from their thrones to resign them to him; when he comes into the state of the dead, shall upbraid him with this, shall go forth to meet him, as they used to do when he made his public entry into cities he was become master of; with such a parade shall he be introduced into those regions of horror, to make his disgrace and torment more grievous to him. They shall scoffingly rise from their thrones and seats there, and ask him if he will please to sit down in them, as he used to do in their thrones on earth? The confusion that will then cover him they shall make a jest of, *Art thou also become weak as we? Who would have thought it? It is what thou thyself didst not expect it would ever come to, when thou wast in every thing too hard for us. Thou that didst rank thyself among the immortal gods, art thou come to take thy fate among us poor mortal men? Where is thy pomp now, and where thy mirth? ver. 11.* How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! The king of Babylon had shone as bright as the morning star, and fancied that wherever he came he brought day along with him; and is such an illustrious prince as this fallen? such a star become a clod of clay? Did ever any man fall from such a height of honour and power, into such an abyss of shame and misery! This has been commonly alluded to (and it is a mere allusion) to illustrate the fall of the angels, that were as morning stars, *Job xxxviii. 7.* But how are they fallen! How art thou cut down to the ground, and levelled with it, that didst weaken the nations! God will reckon with those that invade the rights, and disturb the peace of mankind, for he is King of nations as well as saints.

Now this reception of the king of Babylon into the regions of the dead, which is here described, surely is something more than a flight of fancy, and is designed to speak these solid truths: (1.) That there is an invisible world, a world of spirits, to which the souls of men remove at death, and in which they exist and act in a state of separation from the body. (2.) That separate souls have acquaintance and converse with each other, though we have none with them; the parable of the rich man and Lazarus intimates this. (3.) That death and hell will be death and hell indeed to those that fall unsanctified from the height of this world's pomps, and the fulness of its pleasures: *Son, remember, Luke xvi. 25.*

3. Spectators will stand amazed at his fall. When he shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit, and be lodged there, *ver. 15.* they that see him shall narrowly look upon him, and consider him, they shall scarce be-

lieve their own eyes; never was death so great a change to any man as it is to him: Is it possible, that a man, who a few hours ago looked so great, so pleasant, and was so pleasantly adorned and attended, should now look so ghastly, so despicable, and lie thus naked and neglected? *Is this the man that made the earth to tremble and shook kingdoms? Who would have thought he should ever have come to this? Psal. lxxxii. 7.*

Lastly, here is an inference drawn from all this, *ver. 20.* The seed of evil doers shall never be renowned. The princes of the Babylonian monarchy were all a feed of evil-doers, oppressors of the people of God, and therefore they had this infamy entailed upon them: They shall not be renewed for ever, so some read it? they may look big for a time, but all their pomp will only render their disgrace at last the more shameful; their is no credit in a sinful way.

2. The utter ruin of the royal family is here foretold, together with the defolation of the royal city.

1. The royal family is to be wholly extirpated. The Medes and Persians that are to be employed in this destroying work, are ordered when they have slain Belshazzar, to prepare slaughter for his children, *ver. 21.* and not to spare them; the little ones of Babylon must be dashed against the stones, *Psal. cxxxvii. 9.* These orders sound very harsh; but, (1.) They must suffer for the iniquity of their fathers, which is often visited upon the children, to shew how much God hates sin and is displeased at it, and to deter sinners from it, which is the end of punishment. Nebuchadnezzar had slain Zedekiah's son, *Jer. lli. 10.* and for that iniquity of his, his seed are paid in the same coin. (2.) They must be cut off now, that they may not rise up to possess the land, and do as much mischief in their day as their fathers had done in theirs; that they may not be as vexatious to the world by building cities for the support of their tyranny, (which was Nimrod's policy, *Gen. x. 10, 11.*) as their ancestors had been by destroying cities. Pharaoh oppressed Israel in Egypt by setting them to build cities, *Exod. i. 11.* The providence of God consults the welfare of nations more than we are aware of, by cutting off some that if they had lived would have done mischief. Justly may the enemies cut off the children, for *I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts, ver. 22.* And if God reveal it as his mind that he will have it done, as none can hinder it, so none need scruple to further it. Babylon perhaps was proud of the numbers of her royal family, but God had determined to cut off the name and remnant of it, so that none should be left, to have both the sons and grandsons of the king slain; and yet we are sure he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures.

2. The royal city is to be demolished and deserted, *ver. 23.* It shall be a possession for solitary frightful birds, particularly the bittern, joined with the cormorant and the owl, *chap. xxxiv. 11.* And thus the utter destruction of the New Testament Babylon is illustrated, *Rev. xviii. 2.* it is become a cage of every unclean and hateful birds. Babylon lay low, so that when it was deserted, and no care taken to drain the land, it became pools of water, standing stinking puddles, as unhealthful as unpleasant: and thus God will sweep it with the besom of destruction. When a people have nothing among them but dirt and filth, and will not be made clean with the besom of reformation, what can they expect but to be swept off the face of the earth with the besom of destruction?

24. ¶ The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: 25. That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. 26. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. 27. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out; and who shall turn it back? 28. In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden. 29. ¶ Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. 30. And the first-born of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant. 31. Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou, whole Palestina, art dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times. 32. What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.

The destruction of Babylon and the Chaldean empire was a thing at a great distance; the empire was not risen to any considerable height when its fall was here foretold: it was almost two hundred years from this prediction of Babylon's fall to the accomplishment of it. Now the people to whom Isaiah prophesied might ask, What is this to us, or what shall we be the better for it? And what assurance shall we have of it? To both which questions he answers in these verses, by a prediction of the ruin both of the Assyrians and of the Philistines, the present enemies that infested them, which they should shortly be eye-witnesses of, and have benefit by. These would be a present comfort to them and a pledge of future deliverance, for the confirming of the faith of their posterity. God is to his people the same to day that he was yesterday, and will be hereafter; and he will for ever be the same that he hath been and is. Here is,

1. Assurance given of the destruction of the Assyrians, *ver. 26.* I will break the Assyrian in my land. Sennacherib brought a very formidable army into the land of Judah, but there God broke it, broke all his regiments by the sword of a destroying angel. Note, Those who wrongfully invade God's land, it is at their peril; and those who with unhallowed feet trample upon his holy mountains, they shall themselves there be trodden under foot. God undertakes to do it himself, his people having no might against the great company that came against them: I will break the Assyrian, let me alone to do it, who have angels, hosts of angels at command. Now the breaking of the power of the Assyrian would be the breaking of the yoke from off the neck of God's people, his burden shall depart from off their shoulders, the burden of quartering that vast army and paying contribution; therefore the Assyrian must be broken, that Judah and Jerusalem may be

be eased, Let those that make themselves a yoke and a burden to God's people, see what they are to expect.

Now, 1. This prophecy is here ratified and confirmed by an oath, *ver. 24. The Lord of hosts hath sworn*, that he might shew the immutability of his counsel, and that his people may have strong consolation, *Heb. vi. 17, 18.* What is here said of this particular intention, is true of all God's purposes: *As I have thought, so shall it come to pass; for he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* Nor is he ever put upon new counsels, or obliged to take new measures as men often are, when things occur which they did not foresee. Let those who are *called according to God's purpose* comfort themselves with this, that *as God hath purposed, so shall it stand*, and on that their stability doth depend.

2. The breaking of the Assyrian power is made a specimen of what God would do with all the powers of the nations that were engaged against him and his church, *ver. 26. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth*, the whole world, so the LXX; *all the inhabitants of the earth*, so the Chaldee; not only upon the Assyrian empire, which was then reckoned to be in a manner all the world, as afterwards the Roman empire was, *Luke ii. 1.* and with it many nations fell that had dependence upon it; but upon all those states and potentates that should at any time attack his land, his mountain, the fate of the Assyrians shall be their's, they shall soon find that they meddle to their own hurt; Jerusalem, as it was to the Assyrians, will be to all people a burdensome stone, all that burden themselves with it shall infallibly be cut to pieces by it, *Zech. xii. 3—6.* The same hand of power and justice that is now to be stretched out against the Assyrian for invading the people of God, shall be stretched out upon all the nations, that do likewise. It is still true, and will be ever so, *Cursed is he that curseth God's Israel*, *Numb. xxiv. 9.* God will be an enemy to his people's enemies, *Exod. xxxiii. 22.*

3. All the powers on earth are defied to change God's counsel, *ver. 27. The Lord of hosts hath purposed to break the Assyrians' yoke*, and every rod of the wicked laid upon the lot of the righteous, and who shall disannul this purpose? Who can persuade him to recal it, or find a plea to evade it? His hand is stretched out to execute this purpose, and who hath power enough to turn it back, or to stay the course of his judgments?

4. Assurance is likewise given of the destruction of the Philistines and their power. This burden, this prophecy, that laid load upon them to sink their state, came to the year that king Ahaz died, which was the first year of Hezekiah's reign, *ver. 28.* when a good king came in the room of a bad one, then this acceptable message was sent among them. When we reform, then, and not till then, we look for good news from heaven. Now here we have,

1. A rebuke to the Philistines for triumphing in the death of king Uzziah. He had been as a servant to them, had bitten them, had smitten them, had brought them very low; *2 Chron. xxvi. 6. he warranted against the Philistines, broke down their walls, and built cities among them;* but when Uzziah died, or rather abdicated, it was told with joy in Gath, and published in the streets of Askelon. It is inhuman thus to rejoice in our neighbours' fall; but let them not be secure, for though when Uzziah was dead, they made reprisals upon Ahaz, and took many of the cities of Judah, *2 Chron. xxviii. 18.* yet out of the root of Uzziah shall come a cockatrice, a more formidable enemy than Uzziah was, even Hezekiah, the fruit of whose government should be to them a fiery flying serpent, for he should fall upon them with incredible swiftness and fury: we find he did so, *2 Kings xviii. 8. He smote the Philistines even to Gaza.* Note, If God remove one useful instrument in the midst of his usefulness, he can and will raise up others to carry on and complete the same work that they were employed in and left unfinished.

2. A prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines by famine and war: (1.) By famine, *ver. 30.* when the people of God, whom the Philistines had wasted, and distressed, and impoverished, shall enjoy plenty again, and the first-born of their poor shall feed, i. e. the poorest among them shall have food convenient, when as for the Philistines God will kill their roof with famine; that which was their strength, and with which they thought themselves established as the tree is by the root, shall be starved and dried up by degrees, as those die that die by famine; and thus he shall slay the remnant: those that escape from one destruction, are but reserved for another; and when there are but a few left, those few shall at length be cut off, for God will make a full end. (2.) By war; when the needy of God's people shall lie down in safety, *ver. 30.* not terrified with the alarms of war, but delighting in the songs of peace, then every gate and every city of the Philistines, shall be howling and crying, *ver. 31.* and there shall be a total dissolution of their state; for from Judah, which lay north of the Philistines, there shall come a smoke, a vast army raising a great dust, a smoke that shall be the indignation of a devouring fire at hand; and none of all that army shall be alone in his appointed times; none shall straggle or be missing when they are to engage; but they shall be vigorous and unanimous in attacking the common enemy, when the time appointed for the doing of it comes. None of them shall decline the public service, as in Deborah's time Reuben abode among the sheep-folds, and Asher on the sea-shore, *Judges, v. 16, 17.* When God has work to do, he will wonderfully spirit men for it.

3. The good use of that should be made of all these events for the encouragement of the people of God, *ver. 32. What shall one then answer the messengers of the nations?* This implies, (1.) That the great things God doth for his people are and cannot but be taken notice of by their neighbours; they among the heathen make remarks upon them, *Psal. cxxvi. 2.* (2.) That messengers will be sent to enquire concerning them: Jacob and Israel have long been a people distinguished from all others, and dignified with uncommon favours; and therefore some for good-will, others for ill-will, and all for curiosity, are inquisitive concerning them. (3.) That it concerns us always to be ready to give reason of the hope that we have in the providence of God, as well as in his grace, in answer to every one that asks it, with *meekness and fear*, *1 Pet. iii. 15.* And we need go no farther than the sacred truths of God's word for a reason, for God in all he doth is fulfilling the scripture. (5.) The issue of God's dealings with his people shall be so clearly and manifestly glorious, that any one, every one shall be able to give an account of them to those who enquire concerning them. Now the answer which is to the messengers of the nations is, (1.) That God is and will be a faithful friend to his church and people, and will secure and advance their interests. Tell them that the Lord hath founded Zion. This gives an account both of the work itself that is done, and of the reason of it. What is God doing in the world, and what is he designing in all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, in the ruin of some nations, and the rise of others? He is in all this founding Zion, he is aiming at the advancement of his church's interests, and what he aims at he will accomplish. The messengers of the nations, when they sent to enquire concerning Hezekiah's successes against the Philistines, expect to learn by what politics, counsels, and arts of war, he carried his point: but are told, there were not owing to any thing of that nature; but to the care God took of his church, and the interest he had in it. The Lord hath founded Zion, and therefore the

Philistines must down. (2.) That his church hath and will have a dependence upon him; the poor of the people shall trust in it: his poor people that have been brought very low, even the poorest of them; they more than others, for they have nothing else to trust to, *Zeph. iii. 12, 13.* the poor receive the gospel, *Matt. xi. 5.* They shall trust to this, to this great truth, that the Lord hath founded Zion: on this they shall build their hopes, and not on an arm of flesh. This ought to give us abundant satisfaction as to public affairs, that however it goes with particular persons, parties, and interests, the church having God himself for its founder, and Christ the rock for its foundation, cannot but stand firm. The poor of his people shall betake themselves to it, so some read it; shall join themselves to his church, and embark in its interests; they shall concur with God in his designs to establish his people, and shall wind up all on the same bottom, and make all their little concerns and projects truckle to that. They that take God's people for their people, must be willing to take their lot with them, and cast in their lot among them. Let the messengers of the nations know that the poor Israelites that trust in God, having like Zion their foundation in the holy mountains (*Psal. lxxxvii. 1.*) they are like Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever, (*Psal. cxxv. 1.*) and therefore they will not fear what man can do unto them.

C H A P. XV.

This chapter, and that which follows it, are the burden of Moab: a prophecy of some great desolation that was coming upon that country, which bordered upon this land of Israel, and had often been injurious and vexatious to it; though the Moabites were descended from Lot, Abraham's kinsman and companion. And though the Israelites by the appointment of God had spared them, when they might both easily and justly have cut them off with their neighbours. In this chapter we have, (1.) Great lamentations made by the Moabites, and by the prophet himself for them, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) The great calamities which should occasion that lamentation and justify it, *ver. 6—9.*

1. **T**HE burden of Moab, Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence; 2. He is gone to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep: Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba, on all their heads shall be baldness and every beard cut off. 3. In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets every one shall howl, weeping abundantly. 4. And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh: the voice shall be heard even unto Jahaz: therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out: his life shall be grievous unto him. 5. My heart shall cry out for Moab, his fugitives shall flee unto Zoar, an heifer of three year old: for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up: for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction.

The country of Moab was but of small extent, but very fruitful; it bordered upon the lot of Reuben on the other side Jordan, and upon the Dead-sea. Naomi went to sojourn there when there was a famine in Canaan. This is the country which (it is here foretold) should be wasted and grievously harassed; not quite ruined, for we find another prophecy of its ruin, *Jer. xlviii.* which was accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar. This prophecy here was to be fulfilled within three years, *chap. xvi. 14.* and therefore was fulfilled with the devastations made of that country by the army of the Assyrians, which for many years ravaged those parts, enriching themselves with spoil and plunder. Either it was done by the army of Salmaneser, about the time of the taking of Samaria in the fourth year of Hezekiah, as is most probable; or by the army of Sennacherib, which ten years after invaded Judah.

We cannot suppose that the prophet went among the Moabites to preach them this sermon, but he delivered it to his own people, (1.) To shew them, that though judgment begins at the house of God, yet it shall not end there; and that there is a providence which governs the world and all the nations of it; and to the God of Israel the worshippers of the false gods were accountable, and liable to his judgments. (2.) To give them a proof of God's care of them and jealousy for them; and to convince them that God was an enemy to their enemies, for such the Moabites had often been.

(3.) That the accomplishment of this prophecy now shortly (*within three years*) might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and of the truth of all his other prophecies, and might encourage the faithful to depend upon them.

Now concerning Moab it is here foretold,

1. That their chief cities should be surprised and taken in a night by the enemy, probably because the inhabitants, as the men of Laish, indulged themselves in ease and luxury and dvelt securely, *ver. 1.* Therefore there shall be great grief, because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and Kir of Moab; the two principal cities of that kingdom. In the night they were taken or sacked, Moab was cut off. The seizing of them laid the whole country open, and made all the wealth of it an easy prey to the victorious army. Note, 1. Great changes and very dismal ones may be made in a very little time. Here are two cities lost in a night, though that is the time of quietness; let us therefore lie down as those that know not what a night may bring forth. 2. As the country feeds the cities, so the cities protect the country, and neither can say to the other, *I have no need of thee.*

2. That the Moabites being hereby put into the utmost consternation imaginable, should have recourse to their idols for relief, and pour out their tears before them, *ver. 2.* He, that is, Moab, especially the king of Moab, is gone up to Bajith; or rather to the house or temple of Chemosh: and Dibon, i. e. the inhabitants of Dibon, are gone up to the high-places, where they worshipped their idols, there to make their complaints. Note, It becomes a people in distress to seek to their God: and shall not we then thus walk in the name of the Lord our God; and call upon him in the time of trouble, before whom we shall not shed such useless tears as they did before their gods?

3. That there should be the voice of an universal grief all the country over. It is described here elegantly and very affectingly; Moab shall be a vale of tears, a little map of this world, *ver. 2.* The Moabites shall lament the loss of Nebo and Medeba, two considerable cities, which it is likely were plundered and burnt. They shall tear their hair for grief to that degree, that on all their heads there shall be baldness; and they shall cut off their

their beards, according to the customary expressions of mourning in those times and countries. When they go abroad they shall be so far from coveting to appear handsome, that in the streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: and perhaps, being forced to use that poor clothing, the enemy having stripped them, and rifled their houses, and left them no other clothing. When they come home, instead of applying themselves to their business, they shall go up to the tops of their houses, which were flat-roofed, and there they shall weep abundantly, nay, they shall howl in crying to their gods: those that cry not to God with their heart do but howl upon their beds, Hosea vii. 14. Amos viii. 3. They shall come down with weeping, so the margin reads it; they shall come down from their high places and the tops of their houses, weeping as much as they did when they went up. Prayer to the true God is heart's ease, 1 Sam. i. 18. but prayers to false gods are not. Divers places are here named that should be full of lamentation, ver. 4. and it is but a poor relief to have so many fellow-sufferers, fellow-mourners; to a public spirit, that is rather an aggravation, *Socios habuisse dolores*.

4. That the courage of their militia should fail them; though they were hard soldiers, and were well armed: yet they shall cry out, and shrink for fear, and every one of them shall have his life become grievous to him; though it is a military life, which useth to delight in danger, ver. 4. See how easily God can dispirit the stoutest of men, and deprive a nation of benefit by those whom it most depended upon for strength and defence. The Moabites shall generally be so overwhelmed with grief, that life itself shall be a burden to them. Those that are most fond of life, God can easily make them sick of it.

5. That the outcry for these calamities should propagate grief into all the adjacent parts, ver. 5. (1.) The prophet himself hath very sensible impression made upon his spirit by the prediction of it: *My heart shall cry out for Moab*; though they are enemies to Israel, they are our fellow-creatures, of the same rank with us, and therefore it should pity us to see them in such distress, the rather because we do not know how soon it may be our own turn to drink of the same cup of trembling. Note, It becomes God's ministers to be of a tender spirit, not to desire the woeful day, but to be like their master, who wept over Jerusalem, even then when he gave her up to ruin; like their God, who desires not the death of sinners. (2.) All the neighbouring cities shall echo to the lamentations of Moab. The fugitives that are making the best of their way to shift for their own safety, shall carry the cry to Zoar, the city to which their ancestor Lot fled for shelter from Sodom's flames, which was spared for his sake. They shall make as great a noise with their cry, as a heifer of three years old doth when she goes a losing for her calf, as 1 Sam. vi. 12. They shall go up the hill of Luhith, as David went up the ascent of Mount Olivet; many a weary step, and all in tears, 1 Sam. xv. 30. And in the way of Horonaim, (a dual termination) the way that leads to the two Beth-horons, the upper and the nether; which we read of, *Josh. xvi. 3—5*. thither the cry shall be carried, there it should be raised, even at that great distance, a cry of destruction, that shall be the cry; like fire, fire, we are all undone. Grief is catching, so is fear, and justly, for trouble is spreading; and when it begins, who knows where it will end?

6. For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing. 7. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows. 8. For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab; the howling thereof unto Eglaim, and the howling thereof unto Beer-elim. 9. For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood: for I will bring more upon Dimon, lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land.

Here the prophet farther describes the woeful and pitious lamentations, that should be heard throughout all the country of Moab, when it should become a prey to the Assyrian army: By this time the cry is gone round about all the borders of Moab, ver. 8. Every corner of the country has received the alarm, and is in the utmost confusion upon it; it is gone to Eglaim, a city at one end of the country; and to Beer-elim, a city as far the other way. Where sin has been general, and all flesh have corrupted their way, what else can be expected, but a general desolation.

Two things are here spoken of, as causes of this lamentation.

1. The waters of Nimrim are desolate, ver. 6. i. e. The country is plundered and impoverished, and all the wealth and substance of it swept away by the victorious army. Famine useth to be the sad effect of war. Look into the fields that were well watered, the fruitful meadows, that yielded delightful prospects, and more delightful products, and there all is eaten up, or carried off by the enemy's foragers, and the remainder trodden to dirt by their horses. If an army encamp upon green fields, their greenness is soon gone: Look into the houses and they are stripped too, ver. 7. The abundance of wealth that they had gotten with a great deal of art and industry: and that which they have laid up with a great deal of care and confidence, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows: Either the owners shall carry it thither to hide it, or the enemies shall carry it thither to pack it up, and send it home, by water perhaps to their own country. Note, 1. Those that are eager to get abundance of this world, and solicitous to lay up what they have gotten, little consider what may become of it, and in how little time it may be all taken from them. Great abundance by tempting the robbers exposeth the owners; and they who depend upon it to protect them, often find it doth but betray them. 3. In times of distress, great riches are many times great burdens, and do but increase the owner's care, or the enemy's strength: *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator*.

2. The waters of Dimon are turned into blood, ver. 9. i. e. The inhabitants of the country are slain in great numbers, so that the waters adjoining to the cities, whether rivers or pools, are discoloured with human gore, inhumanly shed like water. Dimon signifies bloody, the place shall answer its name: Perhaps it was that place in the country of Moab where the waters seemed to the Moabites as blood, 2 Kings iii. 22, 21, which occasioned their overthrow. But now, saith God, I will bring more upon Dimon, more blood than was shed or thought to be seen at that time: I will bring additions upon Dimon, so the word is, additional plagues, I have yet more judgments in reserve for them; for all this God's anger is not turned away: When he judgeth, he will overcome; and to the roll of curses, shall be added many like words, Jer. xxxiv. 32. See here what is the yet more evil to be brought upon Dimon, upon Moab, which is now to be made a land of blood; some flee and make their escape, others sit still, and are overlooked, and are as a remnant of the land; but upon both God will bring lions, beasts of prey,

(which are reckoned one of God's four judgments, *Ezek. xiv. 21*.) and these shall glean up those that have escaped the sword of the enemy. Those that continue impenitent in sin, when they are preserved from one judgment, are but reserved for another.

C H A P. XVI.

This chapter continues and concludes the burden of Moab: In it, (1.)

The prophet gives good counsel to the Moabites, to reform what was amiss among them, and particularly to be kind to God's people, as the likeliest way to prevent the judgments before threatened, ver. 1—5.

(2.) Fearing they would not take this counsel they were so proud, he goes on to foretel the lamentable devastation of their country, and the confusion they should be brought to, and this within three years, ver. 6—14.

1. SEND ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion. 2. For it shall be, that, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon. 3. Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noon day; hide the out-casts; bewray not him that wandereth. 4. Let mine out-casts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a cover to them from the face of the spoiler; for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. 5. And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.

God has made it to appear, he delights not in the ruin of sinners, by telling them what they may do to prevent the ruin; so he doth here to Moab.

1. He adviseth them to be just to the house of David, and to pay the tribute they had formerly covenanted to pay to the kings of his line, ver. 1. Send ye the lamb by the rulers of the land: David made the Moabites tributaries to him, 2 Sam. viii. 2. they became his servants and brought gifts: Afterwards they paid their tribute to the kings of Israel, 2 Kings iii. 4. and paid it in lambs. Now the prophet requires them to pay it to Hezekiah. Let it be raised and levied from all parts of the country, from Sela, a frontier city of Moab on the one side, to the wilderness, a boundary of the kingdom on the other side; and let it be sent where it should be sent to the mount of the daughter of Zion the city of David. Some take it as advice to send a lamb for a sacrifice to God the ruler of the earth, so it may be read, the Lord of the whole earth, ruler of all lands; the lands of Moab, as well as the land of Israel; send it to the temple built on mount Zion. And some think it is in this sense spoken ironically, upbraiding the Moabites with their folly in delaying to repent, and make their peace with God. Now you would be glad to send a lamb to mount Zion, to make the God of Israel your friend: but it is too late, the decree hath brought forth, the consumption is determined, and the daughters of Moab shall be cast out as a wandering bird, ver. 2. I rather take it as good advice seriously given; like that of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar then when he was reading him his doom, Dan. iv. 27. Break off thy sins by righteousness, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity; and as it is applicable to the great gospel-duty of submission to Christ, as the ruler of the land and our ruler, send him the lamb, the best you have, yourselves a living sacrifice. When you come to God the great ruler, come in the name of the Lamb, the Lamb of God: For else it shall be, (so we may read it, ver. 2.) that as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be. If you will not pay your quit rent, your just tribute to the king of Judah, you shall be turned out of your houses: The daughters of Moab, the country villages, or the women of your country, shall flutter about the fords of Arnon, attempting that way to make their escape to some other land, like a wandering bird thrown out of the nest half-sledged. Those that will not submit to Christ, nor be gathered under the shadow of his wings, shall be as a bird that wanders from her nest; that shall either be snatched up by the next bird of prey, or shall wander endlessly in continual frights. Those that will not yield to the fear of God, shall be made to yield to the fear of every thing else.

He adviseth them to be kind to the seed of Israel, ver. 3. Take counsel; call a convention, and consult among yourselves what is fit to be done in the present critical juncture; and you will find it your best way to execute judgment, to reverse all the unrighteous decrees you have made, by which you have put hardships upon the people of God, and, in token of your repentance for them, study now how to oblige them, and this shall be accepted of God more than all burnt-offering and sacrifice.

1. The prophet foresaw some storm coming upon the people of God, perhaps, the good people of the then tribes, or of the two and a half on the other side Jordan, whose country joined to that of Moab, and who, by the merciful providence of God, escaped the fury of the Assyrian army, had their lives given them for a prey, and were reserved for better times, but were put to the utmost extremity to shift for their own safety. The danger and trouble they were in, was like the scorching heat at noon; the face of the spoiler was very fierce upon them, and the oppressor and extortioner was ready to swallow them up after what they had.

2. He bespeaks a shelter for them in the land of Moab, when their own land was made too hot for them. This judgment they must execute; thus wisely must they do for themselves, and thus kindly must they deal with the people of God: If they would themselves continue in their habitations, let them now open their doors to the distressed members of God's church, and be to them like a cool shade to those that bear the burden and heat of the day. Let them not discover those that absconded among them, nor deliver them up to the pursuers that made search for them; bewray not him that wandereth, nor deliver him up, as the Edomites did, Obad. 13—19. but hide the out-casts. This was that good work by which Rahab's faith was justified, and proved to be sincere, Heb. xi. 31. Nay, do not only hide them for a time; but if there be occasion, let them be naturalized: let mine out-casts dwell with thee, Moab; find a lodging for them, and be thou a covert to them: Let them be taken under the protection of the government, though they are but poor and likely to be a charge to thee. Note, 1. It is often the lot even of those who are Israelites indeed, to be out-casts, driven out of house and harbour, by persecution or war, Heb. xxi. 37. 2. God owns them

them, when men reject and disown them: They are out-casts, but they are mine out-casts: The Lord knows them that are his, wherever he finds them, even there where no one else knows them. 3. God will find a rest and shelter for his out-casts: for though they are persecuted, they are not forsaken: He will himself be their dwelling-place, if they have no other, and in him they shall be at home. 4. God can when he pleaseth raise up friends for his people, even among Moabites, when they can find none in all the land of Israel that can and dare shelter them: The earth often helps the woman, *Rev. xxii. 16.* 5. Those that expect to find favour when they are in trouble themselves, must shew favour to those that are in trouble; and what service is done to God's out-casts, shall, no doubt, be recompensed one way or other.

3. He assures them of the mercy God had in store for his people: (1.) That they should not long need their kindness, or be troublesome to them, for the extortioner is almost at an end already, and the spoiler ceaseth: God's people shall not be long out-casts, they shall have tribulation ten days, *Rev. ii. 10.* and that is all. The spoiler would never cease spoiling, if he might have his will; but God hath him in a chain; *Hitherto he shall go but no further.* (2.) That they should ere long be in a capacity to return their kindness, *ver. 5.* Though the throne of the ten tribes be sunk and overturned, yet the throne of David shall be established in mercy, by the mercy they receive from God, and the mercy they shew to others: And by the same methods may your throne be established if you please. It would engage great men to be kind to the people of God, if they would but observe, as they easily might, how often that brings the blessing of God upon kingdoms and families. Make Hezekiah your friend, for you will find it your interest to do so, upon the account both of the grace of God in him and the presence of God with him: He shall sit upon the throne in truth, and then he doth indeed sit in honour and sit fast; Then he shall sit judging, and will then be a protector to those that have been a shelter to the people of God. And see in him the character of a good magistrate: (1.) He shall seek judgment; i. e. he shall seek occasions of doing right to those that are wronged, and shall punish the injurious even before they are complained of: or, he shall diligently search into every cause brought before him, that he may find where the right lies. (2.) He shall hasten righteousness, and not delay to do justice, not keep those long waiting that make application to him for the redress of their grievances. Though he seek judgment, and deliberate upon it, yet he doth not, under pretence of that, stay the progress of the streams of justice. Let the Moabites take example by this, and then assure themselves that their state shall be established.

6. ¶ We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud: even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath: but his lies shall not be so. 7. Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the foundations of Kir-harefeth shall ye mourn; surely they are stricken. 8. For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah; the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness: her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea. 9. Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen. 10. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses: I have made their vintage shouting to cease. 11. Wherefore my bowels shall found like a harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-harefeth. 12. And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he shall come to his sanctuary to pray; but he shall not prevail. 13. This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning Moab since that time. 14. But now the LORD hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of an hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be contemned, with all that great multitude: and the remnant shall be very small and feeble.

Here we have,

1. The sins with which Moab is charged, *ver. 6.* The prophet seems to check himself for going about to give good counsel to the Moabites, concluding they would not take the advice he gave them. He told them their duty; whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear, but despairs of working any good upon them; he would have healed them, but they would not be healed: They that will not be counselled, cannot be helped: Their sins were, 1. Pride; this is most insisted upon; for perhaps there are more precious souls ruined by pride, than by any one lust whatsoever. The Moabites were notorious for this. We have heard on both ears of the pride of Moab: it is what all their neighbours cry out shame upon them for, he is very proud; the body of the nation is so, forgetting the baseness of their original, and the brand of infamy fastened upon them by that law of God, which forbade a Moabite to enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever, *Deut. xxiii. 3.* We have heard of his haughtiness and his pride; it is not the rash rigid censure of one or two concerning them, but it is the character which all that know them will give of them, they are a proud people; and therefore they will not take good counsel when it is given them, they think themselves too wise to be advised; therefore they will not take example by Hezekiah, to do justly and love mercy: they scorn to make him their pattern, for they think themselves able to teach him, They are proud, and therefore will not be subject to God himself, nor regard the warnings he gives them: *The wi. kid in the pride of his countenance will not seek after God;* they are proud, and therefore will not entertain and protect God's out-casts, they scorn to have any thing to do with them; but this is not all. (2.) We have heard of his wrath too, for those that are very proud are commonly very passionate; particularly his wrath against the people of God, whom therefore he will rather persecute than protect. (3.) It is with his lies that he gains the gratification of his pride and his passion; but his lies shall not be so, he shall not compass his proud and angry projects, as he hoped he should: Some read it, *His haughtiness, his pride, and*

his wrath are greater than his strength: We know, if he should lie at his mercy, we should find no mercy with him, but he has not power equal to his malice: his pride draws down ruin upon him, for it is the preface to destruction, and he hath not strength to ward it off.

2. The sorrows with which Moab is threatened, *ver. 7.* Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab; all the inhabitants shall bitterly lament the ruin of their country, they shall complain to one another, every one shall howl in despair, and not one shall either see any cause, or have any heart to encourage his friends, Observe,

1. The causes of this sorrow: (1.) The destruction of their cities; for the foundations of Kir-harefeth shall be mourn: that great and strong city, which had held out against a mighty force, 2. Kings iii. 25. should now be levelled with the ground, either burnt or broken down, and its foundations stricken, bruised, and broken, so the word signifies; they shall howl when they see their splendid cities turned into ruinous heaps. (2.) The desolations of their country; Moab was famous for its fields and vineyards, but those shall be laid waste by the invading army, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* See (1.) What a fruitful, pleasant country they had, as the garden of the Lord *Gen. xiii. 10.* It was planted with choice and noble vines, with principle plants, which reached even to Jazer, a city in the tribe of Gad, the luxuriant branches of their vines wandered, and wounded themselves along the ranges on which they were spread, even though the wilderness of Moab, there were vineyards there; nay, they were stretched out and went even to the sea, the Dead sea; the best grapes grew in their hedge-rows. (2.) How merry and pleasant they had been in it; many a time they had shouted for their summer fruits, and for their harvest, as the country people sometimes do with us, when they have cut down all their corn. They had had joy and gladness in their fields and vineyards, singing and shouting at the treading of their grapes; nothing is said of their praising God for their abundance; and giving him the glory of it; if they had made it the matter of their thanksgiving, they might still have had it the matter of their rejoicing; but they making it the food and fuel of their lusts, &c. (3.) How they should be stripped of all; the fields shall languish, all the fruits of them being carried away or trodden down; they cannot now enrich their owners as they have done, and therefore anguish. The soldiers, called here the lords of the heathen, shall break down all the plants, though they were principal plants, the choicest that could be got: now the shouting for the enjoyment of the summer-fruits is fallen, and is turned into howling for the loss of them; the joy of harvest is ceased, there is no more singing, no more shouting for the treading out of wine; they have not what they have had to rejoice in, nor have they a disposition to rejoice. the ruin of their country hath mowed their mirth. Note, 1. Those that are most addicted to mirth and pleasure, God can easily change their note, can soon turn their laughter into mourning, and their joy into heaviness. 2. Joy in God is upon this account far better than the joy of harvest, that it is what we cannot be robbed of, *Psalm vi. 6, 7.* Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, *Hef. ii. 11, 12.* But a gracious soul can rejoice in the Lord as the God of its salvation, even when the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine, *Hab. iii. 17, 18.* In God therefore let us always rejoice with a holy triumph, and in other things let us always rejoice with a holy trembling; rejoice as though we rejoiced not.

2. The concurrence of the prophet with them in this sorrow, *I will with weeping bewail Jazer, and the vine of Sibmah,* and look with a compassionate concern upon the desolations of such a pleasant country, *I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and mingle them with thy tears;* nay *ver. 11.* it appears to be an inward grief, *My bowels shall found like a harp for Moab;* it shall make such an impression upon him, that he should feel an inward trembling, like that of the strings of a harp when it is played upon. It will become God's prophets to acquaint themselves with grief, the great prophet did so. The afflictions of the world, as well as those of the church, should be afflictions to us. See *chap. xv. 5.*

In the close of the chapter we have,

1. The sufficiency of the gods of Moab, the false gods to help them, *ver. 12.* Moab shall be soon weary of the high-places, he shall spend his spirits and strength in vain in praying to his idols, they cannot help him, and he shall be convinced that they cannot. It is seen, that it is to no purpose to expect any relief from high-places on earth, it must come from above the hills. Men are generally so stupid, that they will not believe, till they are made to see the vanity of idols and of all creature-confidences, nor will come off from them, till they are made weary of them. But when he is weary of his high-places, he will not go as he should to God's sanctuary, but to his sanctuary, i. e. to the temple of Chemosh the principal idol of Moab, so it is generally understood; and he shall pray there to as little purpose, and as little to his own ease and satisfaction, as he did in his high-places: for whatever honours idolaters do to their idols, they do not thereby make them at all the better able to help them: whether they are the *Dii majorum Gentium* or *minorum* they are alike the creatures of men's fancy, and the work of men's hands. Perhaps it may be meant of their coming to God's sanctuary: when they found they could have no succours from their own high-places, some of them would come to the temple of God at Jerusalem to pray there, but in vain, he will justly send them back to the gods whom they have served, *Judg. x. 14.*

2. The sufficiency of the God of Israel, the only true God, to make good what he had spoken against them.

1. The thing itself was long since determined, *ver. 13.* This is the word, this is the thing that the Lord hath spoken concerning Moab, since that time that he began to be so proud and insolent, and abusive to God's people. The country was long ago doomed to ruin; this was enough to give an assurance of it, that it is the word which the Lord hath spoken; and as he will never unsay what he hath spoken, so all the power of hell and earth cannot gainstay it, or obstruct the execution of it.

2. Now it was made known when it should be done; the time was before fixed in the counsel of God, but now it was revealed, the Lord hath spoken that it shall be within three years, *ver. 14.* It was not for us to know, or cover to know, the times and the seasons, any farther than God has thought fit to make them known; and so far we may and must take notice of them: See how God makes known his mind by degrees; the light of divine revelation shone more and more, and so doth the light of divine grace in the heart.

Observe, 1. The sentence passed upon Moab; *The glory of Moab shall be contemned,* i. e. it shall be contemptible, when all those things they have gloried in shall come to nothing: such as the glory of this world, so fading and uncertain, admired a while, but soon slighted. Let that therefore which will soon be contemptible in the eyes of others, be always contemptible in our eyes, in comparison with the far more exceeding weight of glory. It was the glory of Moab that their country was very populous, and their forces courageous; but where is her glory, when all that great multitude is in a manner swept away, some by one judgment, and some by another, and the little remnant that is left shall be very small and feeble, not able to bear up under their own griefs, much less to make head against their enemies,

enemies' insults. Let not therefore the strong glory in their strength, nor the many in their numbers.

2. The time fixed for the execution of this sentence; *Within three years, as the years of a hireling*, i. e. at the three year's end exactly, for a servant that is hired for a certain term keeps count to a day. Let Moab know that her ruin is very near, and prepare accordingly; fair warning is given, and with it space to repent, which if they had improved as Nineveh did, we have reason to think; the judgments threatened had been prevented.

C H A P. XVII.

Syria and Ephraim were confederates against Judah, chap. vii. 1, 2, and they being so closely linked together in their counsels, this chapter, though it be entitled the burden of Damascus (which was the head city of Syria) reads the doom of Israel too. (1.) The destruction of the strong cities both of Syria and Israel is here foretold, ver. 1—5. and again, ver. 9—11. (2.) In the midst of judgment mercy is remembered to Israel, and a gracious promise made that a remnant should be preserved from the calamities, and should get good by them, ver. 6, 7, 8. (3.) The overthrow of the Assyrian army before Jerusalem is pointed at, ver. 12, 13, 14. In order of time this chapter should be placed next after chap. ix. for the destruction of Damascus here foretold happened in the reign of Abaz, 2 Kings xvi. 9.

1. **T**HE burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap. 2. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; they shall be for flocks which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. 3. The fortrefs also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts. 4. And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax clean. 5. And it shall be as when the harveit-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.

We have here the burden of Damascus; the Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *The burden of the cup of the curse to drink to Damascus in*; and the ten tribes being in alliance, they must expect to pledge Damascus in this cup of trembling that is to go round.

1. Damascus itself, the head city of Syria, must be destroyed, the houses, it is likely, will be burnt, at least the walls, and gates, and fortifications demolished, and the inhabitants carried away captive, so that for the present it is *taken away from being a city*, and is reduced not only to a village, but to a ruinous heap, ver. 1. Such desolating work as this doth sin make with cities.

2. The country towns are abandoned by their inhabitants, frightened or forced away by the invaders: *The cities of Aroer* (a province of Syria so called) *are forsaken*, ver. 2. the conquered dare not dwell in them, and the conquerors have no occasion for them, nor did they seize them for want but wantonness; so that the places which should be for men to live in, are for *flocks to lie down in*, which they may do and none will disturb or dislodge them: stately houses are converted into sheep-cotes. It is strange that great conquerors should pride themselves in being common enemies to mankind; but how unrighteous so ever they are, God is righteous in causing these cities to spue out their inhabitants, who by their wickedness had made themselves vile; it is better that *flocks should lie down there*, than that they should harbour such as are in open rebellion against God and virtue.

3. The strong holds of Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, will be brought to ruin; *the fortrefs shall cease from Ephraim*, (ver. 3.) that in Samaria, and all the rest: they had joined with Syria in invading Judah very unnaturally, and now they that had been partakers in sin, should be made partakers in ruin, and justly. When *the fortrefs shall cease from Ephraim*, by which Israel shall be weakened, the kingdom will cease from Damascus, by which Syria will be ruined. The Syrians were the ring-leaders in that confederacy against Judah, and therefore they are punished first and sorest; and because they boasted of their alliance with Israel, now Israel is weakened they are upbraided with those boasts, *the remnant of Syria shall be as the glory of the children of Israel*, those few that remain of the Syrians shall be in as mean and despicable a condition as the children of Israel are, and the glory of Israel shall be no relief or reputation to them. Sinful confederacies will be no strength, no stay to the confederates when God's judgments come upon them.

See here what the glory of Jacob is, when God contends with him, and what little reason Syria will have to be proud of resembling the glory of Jacob.

1. It is wasted like a man in a consumption, ver. 4. the glory of Jacob was their numbers, that they were as the sand of the sea for multitude; but this glory shall be made thin, when many are cut off, and few left: *Then the fatness of their flesh*, which was their pride and security, *shall wax lean*, and the body of the people shall become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Israel died of a lingering disease, the kingdom of the ten tribes wasted gradually, God was to them *as a moth*, Hos. v. 12. Such is all the glory of this world, it soon withers, and is made thin; but there is far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory designed for the spiritual seed of Jacob, which is not subject to any such decay; fatness of God's house which will not wax lean.

2. It is all gathered and carried away by the Assyrian army, as the corn is carried out of the field by the husbandman, ver. 5. The corn is the glory of the field, Psal. lxxv. 13. but when it is reaped and gone, where is the glory? The people had by their sins made themselves ripe for ruin, and their glory was as quickly, as easily, as justly, and as irresistibly put down and taken away, as the corn is out of the field by the husbandman. God's judgments are compared to the *thrusting in of the sickle when the harvest is ripe*, Rev. xix. 15. And the victorious army, like the careful husbandmen in the valley of Rephaim, where the corn was extraordinary, would not, if they could help it, leave an ear behind, would lose nothing that they could lay their hands on.

6. ¶ Yet gleaning-grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of

Israel. 7. At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. 8. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands; neither shall respect that which his fingers have made; either the groves, or the images).

Mercy is here reserved in a parenthesis; in the midst of judgment, for a remnant that should escape the common ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes; though the Assyrians took all the care they could that none should slip out of their net, yet the meek of the earth were hid in the day of the Lord's anger, and had their lives given them for a prey, and made comfortable to them by their retirement to the land of Judah, where they had the liberty of God's courts.

1. They shall be but a small remnant, very few which shall be marked for the preservation, ver. 6. *gleaning grapes shall be left in it*; the body of the people were carried into captivity, but here and there one was left behind, perhaps one or two in a bed, when the other was taken, Luke xvii. 34. The most desolating judgments in this world are short of the last judgment, which shall be universal, and which none shall escape. In times of the greatest calamity some are kept safe, as in times of the greatest degeneracy some are kept pure: But the fewness of those that escape, supposeth the captivity of the far greatest part; those that are left are but like the poor remains of an olive-tree, when it has been carefully shaken by the owner, if there be *two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough* (out of the reach of them that shook it) that is all. Such is the remnant according to the election of grace, very few in comparison with the multitudes that walk on in the broad way.

2. They shall be a sanctified remnant, ver. 7, 8. These few that are preserved, are such as in the prospect of the judgment approaching had repented of their sins, and reformed their lives, and therefore were snatched thus as brands out of the burning: or, such as being escaped, and becoming refugees in strange countries, were awakened partly by a sense of the distinguishing mercy of their deliverance, and partly by the distresses they were still in, to return to God. (1.) They shall look up to their Creator, shall inquire, *Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?* in such a night of affliction as this? Job xxxv. 10, 11. shall acknowledge his hand in all the events concerning them, merciful and afflictive, and shall submit to his hand; they shall give him the glory due to his name, and be suitably affected with his providences; they shall expect relief and succour from him, and depend upon him to help them; *their eyes shall have respect to him, as the eyes of a servant to the hands of his master*, Psal. cxliii. 2. Observe, It is our duty at all times to have respect to God, to have our eyes ever towards him, both as our maker, the author of our being, and the God of nature, and as the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us, and the God of grace; particularly when we are in affliction, our eyes must be towards the Lord to *pluck our feet out of the net*, Psal. xxv. 15. to bring us to this is the design of his providence, as he is our maker, and the work of his grace, as he is the Holy One of Israel. (2.) They shall look off from their idols, the creatures of their own fancy, shall no longer worship them, and seek to them, and expect relief from them: For God will be alone regarded, or he doth not look upon himself as at all regarded: He that looks to his Maker must not look to the altars, *the work of his hands*, but disown them and cast them off; must not retain the least respect for that which his fingers have made, but break it to pieces, though it were his own workmanship, the groves and images; the word signifies images made in honour of the sun, and by which he was worshipped, the most ancient and most plausible idolatry, Deut. iv. 19. Job xxxi. 26. We have reason to account those happy afflictions, which part between us and our sins; and by sensible convictions of the vanity of the world, that great idol, cool our affections to it, and lower our expectation from it.

9. ¶ In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation. 10. Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips: 11. In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.

Here the prophet returns to foretel the woeful desolations that should be made in the land of Israel, by the army of the Assyrians.

1. That the cities should be deserted, even the strong cities, which should have protected the country, shall not be able to protect themselves, they shall be *as a forsaken bough*, and *an uppermost branch* of an old tree, which is gone to decay, forsaken of its leaves, and appears on the top of the tree bare, and dry, and dead; so shall their strong cities look when the inhabitants have deserted them, and the victorious army of the enemy pillaged and defaced them, ver. 9. they shall be as the cities (so it may be supplied) which the Canaanites left, the old inhabitants of the land, because of the children of Israel, when God brought them in with a high hand, to take possession of that good land, cities which they builded not: As the Canaanites then fled before Israel, so Israel should now fly before the Assyrians. And herein the word of God was fulfilled, that if they committed the same abominations, *the land should spue them out, as it spued out the nations that were before them*, Lev. xviii. 28. and that as while they had God on their side *one of them chased a thousand*, so when they had made him their enemy, *a thousand of them should flee at the rebuke of one*; so that in the cities should be desolation, according to the threatenings of the law, Lev. xxvi. 31. Deut. xxviii. 52.

That the country should be laid waste, ver. 10, 11. Observe here, 1. The sin that had provoked God to bring so great a destruction upon that pleasant land; *it was for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein*; it is because *thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation*, and all the great salvations he hath wrought for thee, hast forgotten thy dependence upon him, and obligations to him, and *hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength*; not only who is himself a strong rock, but has been thy strength many a time, or thou hadst been sunk and broken long since. Note, The God of thy salvation is the rock of our strength; and our forgetfulness, and unmindfulness of him is at the bottom of all sin; therefore we have perverted our way, *because we have forgotten the Lord our God*, and so we undo ourselves. 2. The destruction itself, aggravated by the great care they took to improve their land, and to make it yet more pleasant. (1.) Look upon it at the time of the seedness, and it was all like a garden and a vineyard; that pleasant land was replenished with pleasant plants, the choicest of its own growth; nay, so nice

nice and curious were the inhabitants; that not content with them, they sent to all the neighbouring countries for strange slips, the more valuable for being strange, uncommon, far-fetched, and dear bought; though perhaps they had of their own not inferior to them: This was an instance of their pride and vanity, and (that ruining error) their affection to be like the nations. *Wheat, and honey, and oil*, were their staple commodities, *Ezek. xxvii. 17.* but not content with these, they must have flowers and greens with strange names imported from other nations; and a great deal of care and pains must be taken by hot-beds to make these plants grow, the soil must be forced, and they must be covered with glasses to shelter them, and early in the morning the gardeners must be up to make the seed to flourish, that it may excel those of their neighbours: The ornaments of nature are not to be altogether slighted, but it is a folly to be over-sord of them, and to bestow more time, and cost, and pains about them than they deserve, as many do. But here this instance seems to be put in general for their great industry in cultivating the ground, and their expectations from it accordingly; they doubt not but their plants will grow and flourish. But, (2.) Look upon the same ground at the time of harvest, and it is all like a wilderness, a dismal, melancholy place, even to the spectators, much more to the owners; for the harvest shall be a heap, all in confusion, in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow. The harvest used to be a time of joy, of singing and shouting, *chap. xvi. 10.* but this harvest the hungry eateth up, *Job v. 5.* which makes it a day of grief, and the more because the plants were pleasant and costly, *ver. 10.* and their expectations proportionably raised; the harvest had sometimes been a day of grief, if the crop were thin, and the weather unseasonable; and yet in that case there was hopes the next would be better: But this shall be desperate sorrow, for they shall see not only this year's products carried off, but the property of the ground altered, and their conquerors lords of it. The margin reads it, *The harvest shall be removed* (into the enemy's country or camp, *Deut. xxviii. 33.*) in the day of inheritance, (when thou thoughtest to inherit it) and there shall be deadly sorrow: This is a good reason why we should not lay up our treasure in these things which we may so quickly be despoiled of, but in that good part which shall never be taken away from us.

12. ¶ Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! 13. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chafed as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind: 14. And behold at evening-tide trouble: and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

These verses read the doom of those that spoil and rob the people of God; if the Assyrians and Israelites invade and plunder Judah, if the Assyrian army take God's people captive, and lay their country waste, let them know that ruin will be their lot and portion.

They are here brought in,

1. Triumphant over the people of God: They rely upon their numbers; the Assyrian army was made up out of divers nations, it is the multitude of many people, *ver. 12.* by which weight they hope to carry the cause; they are very noisy, like the noise or rout of the seas, they talk big, hector and threaten, to frighten God's people from resisting them, and all their allies from sending in to their aid; Sennacherib and Rabshakeh in their speeches and letters made a mighty noise, to strike a terror upon Hezekiah and his people; the nations that followed them made a rushing like the rushing of many waters, and those mighty ones, that threatens to beat down all before them, and carry away every thing that stands in their way: the floods have lifted up their voice, have lifted up their waves; such is the tumult of the people, and the heathen when they rage, *Psal. ii. 1.* and *xcii. 3.*

2. Triumphed over by the judgments of God: They think to carry their point by dint of noise; but woe to them, *ver. 12.* for he shall rebuke them, *i. e.* God shall, one whom they little think of, have no regard to; stand in no awe of; he shall give them a check with an invisible hand, and then they shall flee far off. Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, and the remains of their forces, they shall run away in a fright, and shall be chafed by their own terror as the chaff of the mountains, which stand bleak before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind; like thisle-down, so the margin; they make themselves as chaff before the wind, *Psal. xxv. 5.* and then the angel of the Lord, (as it follows there) the same angel that slew many of them shall chase the rest; God will make them like a wheel, or rolling thing, and then persecute them with his tempest, and make them afraid with his storm, *Psal. lxxxi. 13—15.* Note, God can dispirit the enemies of his church, when they are most courageous and confident, and dissipate them when they seem most closely consolidated: This shall be done suddenly, *ver. 14.* At evening tide they are very troublesome, and threaten trouble to the people of God, but before the morning he is not, at sleeping-time they are cast into a deep sleep, *Psal. lxxvi. 5, 6.* It was in the night that the angel routed the Assyrian army: God can in a moment break the power of his church's enemies, then when it appears most formidable; and this is written for the encouragement of the people of God in all ages, when they find themselves an unequal match for their enemies, for this is the portion of them that spoil us, they shall themselves be spoiled. God will plead his church's cause, and that they meddle do it to their own hurt.

C H A P. XVIII.

Whatever country it is that is meant here by the land shadowing with wings, here is a woe denounced against it, for God hath put upon his people's account a quarrel with it. (1.) They threaten God's people, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) All the neighbours are hereupon called to take notice what will be the issue, *ver. 3.* (3.) Though God seem unconcerned in the distress of his people for a time, he will at length appear against their enemies, and will remarkably cut them off, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* (4.) This shall redound very much to the glory of God, *ver. 7.*

1. **W**OE to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: 2. That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and

trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled! 3. All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifted up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye. 4. For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling-place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew on the heat of harvest. 5. For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the four grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches. 6. They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth; and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them. 7. ¶ In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden underfoot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion.

Interpreters are very much at a loss where to find this land that lies beyond the rivers of Cush; some take it to be Egypt, a maritime country, and full of rivers, and which courted Israel to depend upon them, but proved broken reeds: but against this it is strongly objected, that the next chapter is distinguished from this by the title of the burden of Egypt. Others take it to be Ethiopia, and read it, *which lies near, or about, the rivers of Ethiopia*, not that in Africa which lay in the south of Egypt, but that which we call Arabia, which lay east of Canaan, which Tihakah was now king of: He thought to protect the Jews as it were under the shadow of his wings, by giving a powerful diversion to the king of Assyria, when he made a descent upon the country, at the time that he was attacking Jerusalem, *2 Kings xix. 9.* But, though by his ambassadors he bid defiance to the king of Assyria, and encouraged the Jews to depend upon him, God by the prophet slights him, and will not go forth with him; he may take his own course, but God will take another course to protect Jerusalem, while he suffers the attempts of Tihakah to miscarry, and his Arabian army to be ruined; for the Assyrian army shall become a present or sacrifice to the Lord of hosts, and to the place of his name, by the hand of an angel, not by the hand of Tihakah, king of Ethiopia, *ver. 7.* This is a very probable exposition of this chapter.

But from a hint of Dr. Lightfoot's in his harmony of the Old Testament, I incline to understand this chapter as a prophecy against Assyria; and so a continuation of the prophecy in the three last verses of the foregoing chapter, with which therefore this should be joined: That was against the army of the Assyrians which rushed in upon Judah, this against the land of Assyria itself, which lay beyond the rivers of Arabia, *i. e.* the river of Euphrates and Tigris, which bordered on Arabia Deserta. And in calling it the land shadowing with wings, he seems to refer to what he himself had said of it, *chap. viii. 8.* that the stretching out of his wings shall fill thy land, O Immanuel: And the prophet might perhaps describe the Assyrians by such dark expressions, not naming them, for the same reason that St. Paul in his prophecy speaks of the Roman empire by a periphrasis, *He who now sitteth, 2 Thess. ii. 7.* Here is,

1. The attempt made by this land (whatever it is) upon a nation scattered and peeled, *ver. 2.* swift messengers are sent by water to proclaim war against them as a nation marked by providence and meted out to be trodden under foot. Whether this be the Ethiopians waging war with the Assyrians, or the Assyrians with Judah, it teacheth us, (1.) That a people that hath been terrible from their beginning, has made a figure and borne a mighty sway, may yet become scattered and peeled, and may be spoiled even by its own rivers, that should enrich both the husbandman and the merchant: Nations that have been formidable, and have kept all in awe about them, may by a concurrence of accidents become despicable, and an easy prey to their insulting neighbours. (2.) Princes and states that are ambitious of enlarging their territories, will still have some pretence or other to quarrel with those whose countries they have a mind to: It is a nation that has been terrible, and therefore we must be revenged on it; it is now a nation scattered and peeled, meted out and trodden down, and therefore it will be an easy prey for us: Perhaps it is not brought so low as they represent it. God's people are trampled on as a nation scattered and peeled, but whosoever thinks to swallow them up, may find them still as terrible as they have been from their beginning; they are cast down but not deserted, not destroyed.

2. The alarm sounded to the nations about, by which they are summoned to take notice of what God is about to do, *ver. 3.* the Ethiopians and Assyrians have their counsels and designs, which they have laid deep and promise themselves much from, and in prosecution of them send their ambassadors and messengers from place to place; but let us now inquire what the great God saith to all this; (1.) He lifts up an ensign upon the mountains, and blows a trumpet, by which he proclaims war against the enemies of his church, and calls in all her friends and well-wishers into her service. He gives notice that he is about to do some great work, as Lord of hosts. (2.) All the world is bid to take notice of it, all the dwellers on earth must see the ensign and hear the trumpet, must observe the motions of the divine providence, and attend the directions of the divine will. Let all list under God's banner, and be on his side, and hearken to the trumpet of his word which gives not an uncertain sound.

3. The assurance God gives to his prophet, by him to be given to his people, and thought he might seem for a time to sit by as an unconcerned spectator, yet he would certainly and seasonably appear for the comfort of his people, and the confusion of his and their enemies, *ver. 4.* So the Lord said unto me. Men will have their saying, but God also will have his; and as we may be sure his word shall stand, so he often whispers it in the ears of his servants the prophets: When he saith, I will take my rest, it is not as if he were weary of governing the world; or as if he either needed or desired to retire from it, and repose himself; but it intimates (1.) That the great God hath a perfect, undisturbed, enjoyment of himself in the midst of all the tosses and changes of this world; the Lord sits even upon the floods unshaken; the eternal mind is always easy. (2.) That sometimes he may seem to his people as if he took not wanted notice of what is done in this lower world; they are tempted to think he is as one asleep or as one astonished, *Psal. xlv. 23.* Jer. xiv. 9. But even then he knows very well what men do, and what he himself will do.

(1.) He will take care of his people, and be a shelter to them; he will

regard his dwelling place, his eye and his heart are and shall be upon it for good continually; Zion is his rest for ever, where he will dwell, and he will look after it, to some read it; will lift up the light of his countenance upon it, will consider over it what is to be done, and will be sure to do all for the best; he will adapt the comforts and refreshments he provides for them to the exigencies of their case; and therefore they will be acceptable because seasonable. (1.) Like a clear heat after rain (so the margin) which is very reviving and pleasant, and makes the herbs to flourish. (2.) Like a dew and a cloud in the heat of harvest, which are very welcome, the dew to the ground, and the cloud to the labourers. Note, There is that in God which is better and refreshment to his people in all weathers, and arms them against the inconveniences of every change: Is the weather cool? There is that in his favour that will warm them: Is it hot? There is that in his favour that will cool them. Great men have their winter house and their summer house, *Amos* iii. 15. but they that are at home with God have both in him.

(1.) He will reckon with his and their enemies, *ver.* 5, 6. when the Assyrian army promiseth itself a plentiful harvest in the taking of Jerusalem, and plundering the rich city, when the bud of that project is perfect; before the harvest is gathered in, while the four grape of their enmity to Hezekiah and his people is ripening in the flower, and the design is just ready to put in execution, God shall destroy that army as easily as the husbandman cuts off the sprigs of the vine with pruning hooks; or, because the grape is sour, and good for nothing, and will not be cured, takes away, and cuts down the branches. This seems to point to the overthrow of the Assyrian army, by a destroying angel; when the dead bodies of the soldiers were scattered like the branches and sprigs of a wild vine, which the husbandman has cut to pieces. And they shall be left to the fowls of the mountains, and the beasts of the earth to prey upon, both winter and summer; for as God's people are protected all seasons of the year, both in cold and heat, *ver.* 4. so their enemies are at all seasons exposed; birds and beasts of prey shall both summer and winter upon them, till they are quite ruined.

4. The tribute of praise which should be brought to God from all this, *ver.* 7. in that time, when this shall be accomplished, *shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts.* (1.) Some understand this of the conversion of the Ethiopians to the faith of Christ in the latter days; of which we have the specimen and beginning in Philip baptizing the Ethiopian eunuchs, *Acts* viii. 27. They that were a people scattered and peeled, meted out, and trodden down, *ver.* 2. shall be a present to the Lord; and though they seem useless and worthless, they shall be an acceptable present to him who judges of men by the sincerity of their faith and love, not by the pomp and prosperity of their outward condition. Therefore the gospel was ministered to the Gentiles, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, *Rom.* xv. 16. It is prophesied, *Psal.* lxxviii. 31. that Ethiopia should *stretch out her hands unto God.* (2.) Others understand it of the spoil of Sennacherib's army, out of which, as usual, presents were brought to the Lord of hosts, *Numb.* xxi. 50. It was the present of a people scattered and peeled, *i. e.* (1.) It was won from the Assyrians, who were now themselves reduced to such a condition as they scornfully described Judah to be in, *ver.* 2. They that unjustly trample upon others, shall themselves be justly trampled upon. (2.) It was offered by the people of God, who were, in disdain, called a people scattered and peeled. God will put honour upon his people, though men put contempt upon them. Lastly, Observe the present that is brought to the Lord of hosts, must be brought to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts; what is offered to God must be offered in the way that he hath appointed; we must be sure to attend him, and expect him to meet us there where he records his name.

C H A P. XIX.

*As Assyria was a breaking rod to Judah with which it was smitten, so Egypt was a broken reed with which it was cheated; and therefore God had a quarrel with them both. We have before read them the doom of the Assyrians, now here we have the burden of Egypt; a prophecy concerning that nation: (1.) That it should be greatly weakened and brought low, and should be as contemptible among the nations as now it was considerable, rendered so by a complication of judgments which God would bring upon them, *ver.* 1—17. (2.) That at length God's holy religion should be brought into Egypt, and set up there, in part by the Jews that should fly thither for refuge, but more fully by the preachers of the gospel of Christ, through whose ministry churches should be planted in Egypt in the days of the Messiah, *ver.* 18—25. which would abundantly balance all the calamities here threatened.*

1. **T**HE burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. 2. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. 3. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. 4. And the Egyptians will I give over unto the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts. 5. And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the rivers shall be wasted and dried up. 6. And they shall turn the rivers far away; and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. 7. The paper-reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more. 8. The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brook shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. 9. Moreover they that work in fine flax, and they that weave net-works shall be confounded. 10. And they all be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish. 11. ¶ Surely the

princes of Zoan are fools; the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish; how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wife, the son of ancient kings? 12. Where are they: where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt. 13. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived: they have also seduced Egypt; even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. 14. The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit. 15. Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do. 16. In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it. 17. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts, which he hath determined against it.

Though the land of Egypt had of old been a house of bondage to the people of God, where they had been ruled with rigour; yet among the unbelieving Jews there still remained much of the humour of their fathers, who said, *Let us make a captain, and return into Egypt.* Upon all occasions they trusted to Egypt for help, *chap.* xxx. 2. and thither they fled in disobedience to God's express command, when things were brought to the last extremity in their own country, *Jer.* xliii. 7. Rabshakeh upbraided Hezekiah with this, *Isa.* xxxvi. 6. While they kept up an alliance with Egypt, and it was a powerfully ally, they stood not in awe of the judgments of God; for against them they depended upon Egypt to protect them. Nor did they depend upon the power of God when at any time they were in distress; but Egypt was their confidence. To prevent all this mischief Egypt must be mortified, and many ways God here tells them he will take to do it.

1. The gods of Egypt shall appear to them to be what they always really were, utterly unable to help them, *ver.* 1. The Lord rider upon a cloud, a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; as a judge goes in state to the bench to try and condemn the malefactors, or as a general takes the field with his troops to crush the rebels; so shall God come into Egypt with his judgments; and when he comes he will certainly overcome. In all this burden of Egypt there is no mention of any foreign enemy invading them, but God himself will come against them, and raise up causes of their destruction from among themselves. He comes upon a cloud, above the reach of opposition or resistance: He comes apace, upon a swift cloud, for their judgment lingereth not, when the time is come: He rides upon the wings of the wind, and far exceeding the greatest pomp and splendor of earthly princes; he makes the clouds his chariots, *Psal.* xviii. 9. and *civ.* 3. When he comes, the idol of Egypt shall be moved, shall be removed at his presence, and perhaps be made to fall as Dagon did before the ark. Isis, Osiris, and Apis, those celebrated idols of Egypt, being found unable to relieve their worshippers shall be disowned and rejected by him. Idolatry had got deeper root in Egypt than in any land beside, even the most absurd idolatries; and yet now the idols shall be moved, and they shall be ashamed of them. When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, he executed judgment upon the gods of the Egyptians, *Numb.* xxxiii. 4. no marvel then if when he comes, they begin to tremble; The Egyptians shall seek to the idols when they are at their wit's end, and consult the charmers and wizards, *ver.* 3. But all in vain, they see their ruin hastening on them notwithstanding.

The militia of Egypt that had been famed for their valour, shall be quite dispirited and disheartened: No kingdom in the world was ever in a better method of keeping up a standing army than the Egyptians were; but now their heroes, that used to be celebrated for courage, shall be posted for cowards; the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it, like wax before the fire, *ver.* 1. the spirit of Egypt shall fail, *ver.* 3. They shall have no inclination, no resolution to stand up in defence of their country, their liberty and property; but shall tamely and ingloriously yield all to the invader and oppressor. The Egyptians shall be like women, *ver.* 16. they shall be frightened and put into confusion by the least alarm; even those that dwell in the heart of the country, in the midst of it; furthest from danger, yet will be as a full of fright as those that are situate on the frontiers. Let not the bold and brave be proud or secure, for God can easily cut off the spirit of princes, *Psal.* lxxvi. 12. and take away their hearts, *Job* xii. 24.

3. The Egyptians shall be embroiled in endless dissensions and quarrels among themselves: There shall be no occasion to bring a foreign force upon them to destroy them, they shall destroy one another, *ver.* 2. I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians. As these divisions and animosities are their sin, God is not the author of them, they come from men's lusts. But God, as a judge, permits them for their punishment; and by their destroying differences, corrects them for their sinful agreements. Instead of helping one another, and acting each in his place for the common good, they shall fight every one against his brother and neighbour, whom he ought to love as himself; city against city; and kingdom against kingdom. Egypt was then divided into twelve provinces, or dynasties; but Plammetichus, the governor of one of them, by setting them at variance with one another, at length made himself master of them all. A kingdom thus divided against itself, would soon be brought to desolation; *En, quo discordia civica preduxit miseros!* It is brought to this by a perverse spirit, a spirit of contradiction, which the Lord would mingle as an intoxicating draught made up of several ingredients, for the Egyptians, *ver.* 14. One party shall be for a thing, for no other reason that because the other is against it; that is a perverse spirit, which if it mingle with the public counsels, tends directly to the ruin of the public interests.

4. Their politics shall be all blasted, and turned into foolishness; when God will destroy the nation, he will destroy the counsel thereof, *ver.* 3. by taking away wisdom from the statesmen, *Job* xvii. 20. or setting them one against another, as Hushai and Ahithophel; or by his providence, breaking their measures even then when they seemed well laid; so that the princes of Zoan are fools, they make fools of one another, every one betrays his own folly, and divine providence makes fools of them all, *ver.* 11. Pharaoh had his wife counsellors, Egypt was famous for such; but their counsel is all become brutish, they have lost all their forecast, one would think they were become idiots, and were bereaved of common sense. Let no man glory then in his own wisdom, nor depend upon that, or upon the wisdom of those about him; for he that gives understanding, can when he pleaseth

take it away. And from them it is most likely to be taken away, that boast of their policy, as Pharaoh's counsellors here did: and to recommend themselves to places of public trust, boasted of their great understanding: I am the son of the wife, of the God of wisdom, of wisdom itself, saith one; my father was an eminent privy-counsellor of note in his day for wisdom: Or of the antiquity and dignity of their families, I am (saith another) the son of ancient kings. The nobles of Egypt bragged much of their antiquity, producing fabulous records of their succession for above ten thousand years. This humour prevailed much among them about this time, as appears by Herodotus, their common boast being, that Egypt was some thousand of years more ancient than any other nation. But *where are thy wise men?* ver. 12. Let them now shew their wisdom by foreseeing what ruin is coming upon their nation, and preventing it if they can. Let them with all their skill *know what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt*, and arm themselves accordingly. Nay, so far are they from doing this, that they themselves are in effect contriving the ruin of Egypt, and hastening it on, ver. 13. The princes of Noph are not only deceived themselves, but they have seduced Egypt, by putting their kings upon arbitrary proceedings; by which both themselves and their people were soon undone. The governors of Egypt, that are the stay and corner stones of the tribes thereof, are themselves undermining of it. It is sad with a people when those that undertake for their safety, are helping forward their destruction, and the physicians of the state are her worst disease: When the things that belong to the public peace, are so far hid from the eyes of those that are intrusted with the public counsels, that in every thing they blunder and take wrong measures: So here, ver. 14. *They have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof*; every step they took was a false step; they always mistook either the end or the means, and their counsels were all unsteady and uncertain, like the staggerings and stammerings of a drunken man in his vomit, that knows not what he saith, nor where he goes. See what reason we have to pray for our privy-counsellors and ministers of state, who are the great supports and blessings of the state, if God give them a spirit of wisdom: But quite contrary, if he hides their heart from understanding.

5. The rod of government shall be turned into the serpent of tyranny and oppression, ver. 4. *The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord*: not a foreigner, but one of their own, one that shall rule over them by an hereditary right; but shall be a fierce king, and rule them with rigour, either the twelve tyrants that succeeded Sethon, or rather Psammethichus that recovered the monarchy again; for he speaks of one cruel lord. Now the barbarous usage which the Egyptian task-masters gave to God's Israel long ago was remembered against them, and they were paid in their own coin by another Pharaoh. It is sad with a people when the powers that should be for edification are for destruction, and they are ruined by those by whom they should be ruled, when such as this is the manner of the king, as it is described in *terrorem*, 1 Sam. viii. 11.

6. Egypt was famous for its river Nile, which was its wealth, and strength, and beauty, and was idolized by them: Now it is here threatened, that *the waters shall fail from the sea* and the river shall be *washed and dried up*, ver. 5. Nature shall not herein favour them as she hath done. Egypt was never watered with the rain of heaven, *Zech. xiv. 11.* and therefore the fruitfulness of their country depended wholly upon the overflowing of their river; if that therefore be dried up, their fruitful land would soon be turned into barrenness, and their harvest cease: *Every thing sown by the brooks will wither* of course, *will be driven away, and be no more*, ver. 7. If the paper-reeds by the brooks, at the very mouth of them, wither, much more the corn that lies at a greater distance, but derives its moisture from them. Yet this is not all, the drying up of their rivers is the destruction, (1.) Of their fortifications, for they are *brooks of defence*, ver. 6. making the country difficult of access to an enemy: deep rivers are the strongest lines, and most hardly forced; Pharaoh is said to be a *great dragon lying in the midst of his rivers*, and guarded by them, bidding defiance to all about him, *Ezek. xxix. 3.* But these shall be emptied and dried up, not by an enemy, as Sennacherib with the *soul of his foot dried up mighty rivers*, *Isa. xxxvii. 25.* and as Cyrus, who took Babylon by drawing Euphrates into many streams; but by the providence of God, which sometimes *turns water-springs into dry ground*, *Psalm cvii. 33.* (2.) It is the destruction of their fish, which in Egypt was much of their food, witness that base reflection which the children of Israel made, *Numb. xi. 5.* *We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely.* The drying up of the rivers will kill the fish, *Psalm cv. 29.* and that will ruin those who make it their business, (1.) To catch fish, whether by angling or nets, ver. 8. they shall lament and languish, for their trade is at an end. There is nothing which the children of this world do more heartily lament, than the loss of that which they used to get money by: *Ploratur lacrymis amissa pecunia veris.* (2.) To keep fish, that it may be ready when it is called for; There were those that *made sluices and ponds for fish*, ver. 10. but they shall be broken in the purposes thereof; their business will fail either for want of water to fill their ponds, or for want of fish to replenish their waters. God can find ways to deprive a country even of that which is its staple commodity: The Egyptians may themselves remember *the fish they have formerly eaten freely*; but now cannot have for money. And that which aggravates the loss of these advantages by the river is, that it is their own doings, ver. 6. *They shall turn the river, far away*: Their kings and great men, to gratify their own fancy, will drain water from the main river to their own houses and grounds at a distance, preferring their private convenience before the public, and so by degrees the force of the river is sensibly weakened. Thus many do themselves a greater prejudice at last than they think of; (1.) Who pretend to be wiser than nature, and to do better for themselves than nature has done. (2.) Who consult their own particular interest more than the common good: Such may gratify themselves, but sure they can never satisfy themselves, who to serve a turn contribute to a public calamity; which they themselves at long run cannot avoid sharing in: Herodotus tells us that Pharaoh-Necho, (who reigned not long after this) projecting to cut a free passage by water from Nilus into the Red-sea, employed a vast number of men to make a ditch or chanel for that purpose; in which attempt he impaired the river, lost an hundred and twenty thousand of his people, and yet left the work unaccomplished.

6. Egypt was famous for the linen manufacture; but that trade shall be ruined. Solomon's merchants traded with Egypt for linen yarn, *2 Kings x. 28.* Their country produced the best flax, and the best hands to work it; but they that work in fine flax shall be confounded, ver. 9. either for want of flax to work on, or for want of a demand for that which they have worked, or opportunity to export it. The decay of trade weakens and wastes a nation, and by degrees brings it to ruin. The trade of Egypt must needs sink, for, ver. 15. *There shall not be any work for Egypt* to be employed in; and where there is nothing to be done, there is nothing to be got. There shall be an universal stop put to business, *no work with either head or tail, branch or rush, man do*; nothing for high or low, weak or strong, to do, *no hire*, *Zech. viii. 10.* Note, The flourishing of a kingdom depends much upon the industry of the people; and then things are likely to do well when all hands are at work: when the head and top-branch doth

not disdain to labour, and the labour of the tail and rush is not disdained: But when the learned professions are unemployed, the topping merchants have no stocks, and the handicraft tradesmen nothing to do, poverty comes upon a people *as one that travaileth*, and *as an armed man*.

8. A general confusion shall seize the Egyptians; they shall be *afraid and fear*, ver. 16. which will be both an evidence of an universal decay, and a means and preface of utter ruin. Two things will put them into this fright: (1.) What they hear from the land of Judah; That shall be a terror to Egypt, ver. 17. when they hear of the desolations made in Judah, by the army of Sennacherib, considering both the near neighbourhood, and the strict alliance that was between them and Judah, they will conclude it must be their turn next to become a prey to that victorious army: When their neighbour's house was on fire, they could not but see their own in danger; and therefore every one of the Egyptians that maketh mention of Judah, shall be afraid in himself, expecting the bitter cup shortly to be put into their hands. (2.) What they see in their own land: They shall fear, ver. 16. *because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts*; and, ver. 17. *because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts*; which from the shaking of his hand, they shall conclude he has determined against Egypt as well as Judah: For if judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? *If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* See here, (1.) How easily God can make those a terror to themselves, that have been not only secure, but a terror to all about them: It is but shaking his hand over them, or laying it upon some of their neighbours, and the stoutest hearts tremble presently. (2.) How well it becomes us to fear before God, when it doth but shake his hand over us, and to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, when it doth but threaten us, especially when we see his counsel determined against us; for who can change his counsel?

18. ¶ In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction. 19. In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD. 20. And it shall be for a sign, and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD, because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. 21. And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD, in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it. 22. And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it, and they shall return, even to the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them. 23. ¶ In that day shall there be a high-way out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. 24. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: 25. Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, And Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

Out of the thick and threatening clouds of the foregoing prophecy, here the sun of comfort breaks forth, and it is the Sun of righteousness: Still God has mercy in store for Egypt, and he will shew it; not so much by reviving their trade, and replenishing their river again, but by bringing the true religion among them, calling them to, and accepting them in, the worship of the only living and true God; and these blessings of grace were much more valuable than all the blessings of nature, wherewith Egypt was enriched. We know not of any event in which this prophecy can be thought to have its full accomplishment, short of the conversion of Egypt to the faith of Christ, by the preaching (as it is supposed) of Mark the evangelist, and the founding of many Christian churches there, which flourished for many ages. Many prophecies of this book point to the days of the Messiah, and why not this? And it is no unusual thing to speak of gospel-graces and ordinances in the language of the Old Testament institutions? And in these prophecies those words, *in that day*, perhaps, have not always a reference to what goes immediately before, but have a peculiar significance pointing at that day which had been so long fixed, and so often spoken of, when the Day-spring from on high should visit this dark world, yet it is not improbable, which some conjecture, that this prophecy was in part fulfilled when those Jews, who fled from their own country to take shelter in Egypt, when Sennacherib invaded their land, brought their religion along with them; and being awakened to great seriousness by the troubles they were in, made an open and zealous profession of it there, and were instrumental to bring many of the Egyptians to embrace it: which was an earnest and specimen of the more plentiful harvest of souls that should be gathered in to God by the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Josephus indeed tells us, that Onias, the son of Onias the high-priest, living an out-law at Alexandria in Egypt, obtained leave of Ptolemy Philometor, then king, and Cleopatra, his queen, to build a temple to the God of Israel, like that at Jerusalem, at Bubastis in Egypt; and pretended a warrant for doing it from this prophecy in Isaiah, that there shall be an altar to the Lord in the land of Egypt; and the service of God continued in it about three hundred and thirty-three years, when it was shut up by Paulinus, soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, see *Joseph. Antiq. l. 13. c. 6.* and *de Bell. Judaic. l. 7. c. 30.* But that temple was all along looked upon by the pious Jews as to great an irregularity, and an affront to the temple at Jerusalem, that we cannot suppose this prophecy to be fulfilled in it.

Observe how the conversion of Egypt is here described.

1. They shall speak the language of Canaan, the holy language, the scripture language; they shall not only understand it, but use it, ver. 19. they shall introduce that language among them, and converse freely with the people of God, and not as they used to do by an interpreter, Gen. xlii. 23. Note, Converting grace, by changing the heart, changeth the language; *for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*. Five cities in Egypt shall speak this language; so many Jews shall come to reside in Egypt, and they shall so multiply there, that they shall soon replenish five cities: one of which shall be the city of Heres, or of the sun, Heliopolis, where the sun

sun was worshipped, the most infamous of all the cities of Egypt for idolatry; even there shall be a wonderful reformation; they shall speak the language of Canaan. Or it may be taken thus, as we render it; That for every five cities that shall embrace religion, there shall be one (a sixth part of the cities of Egypt) that shall reject; and that shall be called a city of destruction, because it refuseth the methods of salvation.

2. They shall swear to the Lord of hosts; not only swear by him, giving him the honour of appealing to him, as all nations did to the gods they worshipped, but they shall by a solemn oath and vow devote themselves to his honour, and bind themselves to his service. They shall swear to cleave to him with purpose of heart, and shall worship him, not occasionally, but constantly. They shall swear allegiance to him as their king, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed.

3. They shall set up the public worship of God in their land, *ver. 19.* There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, an altar on which they shall do sacrifice and oblation, *ver. 21.* therefore it must be understood spiritually: Christ the great altar, which sanctifies every gift, shall be owned there, and the gospel sacrifices of prayer and praise shall be offered up; for by the law of Moses there was to be no other altar for sacrifice but that at Jerusalem. In Christ Jesus all distinction of nations is taken away; and a spiritual altar, a gospel-church in the midst of the land of Egypt, is as acceptable to God as one in the midst of the land of Israel; and spiritual sacrifices of faith and love, and a contrite heart, please the Lord better than an ox or bullock.

4. There shall be a face of religion upon the nation, and an open profession made of it, discernible to all that come among them: not only in the heart of the country, but even in the borders of it, there shall be a pillar, or pillars, inscribed, To Jehovah; to his honour, as before there had been such pillars set up in honour of false gods. As soon as a stranger entered upon the borders of Egypt, he might soon perceive what God they worshipped. Those that serve God must not be ashamed to own him, but be forward to do any thing that may be for a sign and for a witness to the Lord of hosts; that even in the land of Egypt he had some faithful worshippers, who boasted of their relation to him, and made his name their strong tower or bulwark on their borders, with which their coats were fortified against all assailants.

5. Being in distress they shall seek to God, and he shall be found of them; and this shall be a sign and a witness for the Lord of hosts, that he is a God hearing prayer, to all flesh that come to him, *ver. 20.* see *Psal. lxx. 2.* When they cry to God by reason of their oppressors, the cruel lords that shall rule over them, *ver. 4.* he shall be intricated of them, *ver. 22.* whereas he had told his people Israel, who made it their own choice to have such a king, that they should cry to him by reason of their king, and he would not hear them, *1 Sam. viii. 18.*

6. They shall have an interest in the great Redeemer: when they were under the oppression of cruel lords, perhaps God sometimes raised them up mighty deliverers, as he did for Israel in the days of the judges: and by them, though he had smitten the land, he healed it again; and upon their return to God in a way of duty, he returned to them in a way of mercy, and repaired the breaches of their tottering state; for repenting Egyptians shall find the same favour with God that repenting Ninevites did. But all these deliverances wrought for them, as those for Israel, were but figures of gospel salvation. Doubtless, Jesus Christ is the Saviour, and the Great One here spoken of, whom God will send the glad tidings of to the Egyptians, and by whom he will deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him without fear, *Luke i. 74, 75.* Jesus Christ delivered the Gentile nations from the service of dumb idols, and did himself both purchase and preach liberty to the captives.

7. The knowledge of God shall prevail among them, *ver. 21.* (1.) They shall have the means of knowledge: for many ages in Judah only was God known for there only were the lively oracles found; but now the Lord and his name shall be known to Egypt. Perhaps this may in part refer to the translation of the Old Testament out of Hebrew into Greek by the LXX. which was done at Alexandria in Egypt, by the command of Ptolemy king of Egypt, and it was the first time that the scriptures were translated into any other language: by the help of this (Grecian monarchy having introduced their language into that country) the Lord was known to Egypt, and a happy omen and means it was of his being farther known, *ver. 1.* They shall have grace to improve those means: it is promised not only that the Lord shall be known to Egypt, but that the Egyptians shall know the Lord; they shall receive and entertain the light granted to them, and shall submit themselves to the power of it. The Lord is known to our nation, and yet I fear there are many of our nation that do not know the Lord. But the promise of the new covenant is, that all shall know the Lord, from the least even to the greatest; which promise is sure to all the seed. The effect of this knowledge of God is, that they shall vow a vow to the Lord and perform it. For those do not know God aright, who either are not willing to oblige themselves to the Lord, or do not make good those obligations.

8. They shall come into the communion of saints; being joined to the Lord, they shall be added to the church, and be incorporated with all the saints.

1. All enmities shall be slain. Mortal feuds there had been between Egypt and Assyria; they often made war upon one another, but now there shall be a highway between Egypt and Assyria, *ver. 23:* a happy correspondence settled between the two nations; they shall trade with one another, and every thing that passeth between them shall be friendly: The Egyptians shall serve, i. e. worship the true God with the Assyrians: and therefore the Assyrians shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptians into Assyria. Note, It becomes those who have communion with the same God, through the same Mediator, to keep up an amicable correspondence with one another: and the consideration of our meeting at the same throne of grace, and our serving with each other in the same business of religion, should put an end to all heats and animosities, and knit our hearts to each other in holy love.

2. The Gentile nations shall not only unite with each other in the gospel-fold under Christ the great shepherd, but they shall all be united with the Jews. When Egypt and Assyria become partners in serving God, Israel shall make a third with them, *ver. 21.* they shall become a threefold cord, not easily broken: the ceremonial law, which had long been the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles shall be taken down, and then they shall become one sheep-fold under one shepherd. Thus twisted, they shall be a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, *ver. 24, 25.* (1.) Israel shall be a blessing to them all, because of them as concerning the flesh Christ came; and they were the natural branches of the good olive, to whom did originally pertain its root and fatness, and the Gentiles were but grafted in among them, *Rom. xi. 17.* Israel lay between Egypt and Assyria, and was a blessing to them both by bringing them to meet in that word of the Lord which went forth from Jerusalem, and that church which was first set up in the land of Israel: Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio, inter se conveniunt. Israel is that third in whom Egypt and Assyria agree, and is therefore a blessing; for those are real and great blessings to their generation, who are instrumental to unite all those that have been at variance. (2.) They shall all be a blessing to the world, so the Christian church is made up of Jews and

Gentiles; it is the beauty, riches, and support of the world. (3.) They shall all be blessed of the Lord: 1. They shall all be owned by him as his. Though Egypt was formerly a house of bondage to the people of God, and Assyria an unjust invader of them; yet all this shall now be forgiven and forgotten, and they shall be as welcome to the God of Israel. They are all alike his people whom he takes under his protection: they are formed by him, for they are the work of his hands; not only as a people, but as his and dear to him, and from whom he hath his rent of honour out of this lower world. 1. They shall be owned together by him as jointly his; his in comfort: they all share in one and the same blessing. Note, Those that are united in the love and blessing of God, ought for that reason to be united to each other in charity.

C H A P. XX.

This chapter is a prediction of the carrying away of multitudes both of the Egyptians and the Ethiopians into captivity by the king of Assyria. Here is, (1.) The sign by which this was foretold, which was the prophet's going for some time barefoot and almost naked, like a poor captive, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) The explanation of that sign, with application to Egypt and Ethiopia, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* (3.) The good use which the people of God should make of this, which is never to trust in an arm of flesh because thus it will deceive them, *ver. 6.*

1. **I**N the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him) and fought against Ashdod, and took it; 2. At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, thy shoe from thy foot; and he did so, walking naked and barefoot. 3. And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; 4. So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. 5. And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. 6. And the inhabitants of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?

God here as King of nations, brings a sore calamity upon Egypt and Ethiopia, but as King of saints brings good to his people out of it. Observe,

1. The date of this prophecy: it was in the year that Ashdod, a strong city of the Philistines, (but which some think was lately recovered from them by Hezekiah, when he smote the Philistines even unto Gaza, *2 Kings xviii. 8.*) was besieged and taken by an army of the Assyrians, it is uncertain what year of Hezekiah that was, but the event was so remarkable; that they who lived then could by that token fix the time to a year. He that was now king of Assyria is called Sargon, which some take to be the same with Sennacherib; others think he was his immediate predecessor, and succeeded Shalmaneser: Tartan that was general or commander in chief in this expedition, was one of Sennacherib's officers, sent by him to bid defiance to Hezekiah, in concurrence with Rabshakeh, *2 Kings xviii. 17.*

2. The making of Isaiah a sign by his unusual dress when he walked abroad. He had been a sign to his own people of the melancholy times that were come and coming upon them, by the sackcloth which for some time he had worn, of which he had a gown made which he girt about him. Some think he put himself into that habit of a mourner upon occasion of the captivity of the ten tribes: others think sackcloth was what he commonly wore as a prophet, to shew himself mortified to the world, and that he might learn to endure hardness; soft clothing better become those that attend in king's palaces, *Matt. xi. 8.* than those that go on God's errands. Elijah wore haircloth, *2 Kings i. 8.* and John Baptist, *Matt. xiii. 4.* and those that pretend to be prophets supported their pretension by wearing rough garments, *Zech. xiii. 4.* but Isaiah hath orders given to him to loose his sackcloth from his loins, not to exchange it for better clothing, but for none at all, i. e. no upper garment, no mantle, cloke, or coat, but only that which was next to him; suppose his shirt, waistcoat and drawers; and he must put off his shoes and go barefoot: so that compared with others' dress, and what he himself usually wore, he might be said to go naked. This was a great hardship upon the prophet, it was a blemish to his reputation, and would expose him to contempt and ridicule; the boys in the street would hoot at him, and they who sought occasion against him would say, The prophet is indeed a fool, and the spiritual man is mad, *Hos. ix. 7.* It might likewise be a prejudice to his health, he was in danger of catching a cold, which might throw him into a fever and cost him his life: but God bid him do it, that he might give a proof of his obedience to God in a most difficult command; and so shame the disobedience of his people to the most easy and reasonable precepts. When we are in the way of our duty, we may trust God both with our credit and with our safety. The hearts of that people were strangely stupid, and would not be affected with what they heard only, but must be taught by signs, and therefore Isaiah must do this for their edification; if the dress was scandalous, yet the ensign was glorious, and what a prophet of the Lord needed not be ashamed of.

3. The exposition of this sign, *ver. 3, 4.* It was intended to signify that the Egyptians and the Ethiopians should be led away captives by the king of Assyria thus stripped, or in rags and very shabby clothing, as Isaiah was. God calls him his servant Isaiah, because in this matter particularly he had approved himself God's willing, faithful, obedient servant; and for this very thing, which perhaps others laughed at him for, God gloried in him. To obey is better than sacrifice, pleaseth God and praiseth him more, and shall be more praised by him. Isaiah is said to have walked naked and barefoot three years, when ever in that time he appeared as a prophet: but some refer the three years not to the sign, but to the thing signified; he hath walked naked and barefoot, there is a stop in the original: suppose he did so once, that was enough to give occasion to all about him to enquire what was the meaning of his doing so: or as some think, he did it three days, a day for a year; and this for a three years' sign and wonder, i. e. for a sign of that which shall be done three years hence, or which shall be three years in the doing. Three campaigns successively shall the Assyrian army make in spoiling the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and carrying them away captive in this barbarous manner; not only the soldiers taken in the field of battle, but the inhabitants young and old; and it being a very piteous

piteous fight, and such as must needs move compassion in those that had the least degree of tenderness left them, to see those who had gone all their days well dressed now stripped, and scarce having rags to cover their nakedness; that circumstance of their captivity is particularly taken notice of and foretold, the more to affect them to whom this prophecy was delivered. It is particularly said to be to the shame of Egypt, *ver. 4.* because the Egyptians were a proud people, and therefore when they did fall into disgrace it was the more shameful to them; and the higher they had lifted up themselves the lower was their fall, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

1. The use and application of this, *ver. 5, 6.*

1. All that had any dependence upon, or correspondence with, Egypt and Ethiopia, should now be ashamed of them, and afraid of having any thing to do with them. Those countries that were in danger of being over-run by the Assyrians, expect that Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, with his numerous forces, should put a stop to the progress of their victorious arms, and be a barrier to his neighbours; and yet with more assurance they gloried that Egypt, a kingdom so famous for policy and prowess, would do their business, would oblige them to raise the siege of Ashdod, and retire with precipitation; but instead of this, by attempting to oppose him, they do but expose themselves and make their country a prey to him. Hereupon all about them are ashamed that ever they promised themselves any advantage by two such weak and cowardly nations, and more afraid now than ever they were of the growing greatness of the king of Assyria, before whom Egypt and Ethiopia proved but as briars and thorns put to stop a consuming fire, which do but make it burn the more strongly. Note, Those who make any creature their expectation and glory, and to put it in the place of God, will sooner or later be ashamed of it, and their disappointment is it will but increase their fear. See *Ezek. xxix. 6, 7.*

2. The Jews in particular should be convinced of their folly in resting upon such broken reeds, and should despair of any relief from them, *ver. 6.* The inhabitants of this isle, the land of Judah, situated upon the sea, though not surrounded by it; of this country, so the margin: every one shall now have his eyes opened, and shall say, Behold, such is our expectation, so vain; so foolish; and this is that which it will come to; we have fled for help to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and have hoped by them to be delivered from the king of Assyria: but now they are broken thus, how shall we escape, that are not able to bring such armies into the field as they did? Note, 1. Those that confide in creatures will be disappointed, and will be made ashamed of their confidence, for vain is the help of man, and in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills; or the height and multitude of the mountains.

2. Disappointment in creature confidences, instead of driving us to despair, as here, how shall we escape? should drive us to God, to whom if we flee for help our expectation shall not be frustrated.

C H A P. XXI.

In this chapter we have a prophecy of sad times coming and heavy burdens; (1.) Upon Babylon, here called the desert of the sea, that it should be destroyed by the Medes and Persians with a terrible destruction, which yet God's people should have advantage by, *ver. 1—10.* (2.) Upon Dumab or Idumea, *ver. 11, 12.* (3.) Upon Arabia or Kedar, the desolation of which country was very near, *ver. 13—17.* These and other nations which the princes and people of Israel had so much to do with, the prophets of Israel could not but have something to say to; foreign affairs must be taken notice of as well as domestic ones, and news from abroad enquired after as well as news at home.

1. **T**HE burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through, so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land. 2. A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam, besiege, O Media; all the fighting thereof have I made to cease. 3. Therefore are my lions filled with pain; pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was discomfited at the seeing of it. 4. My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me; the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me. 5. Prepare the table; watch in the watch-tower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield. 6. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth. 7. And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels: and he hearkened diligently with much heed: 8. And he cried, A lion: my lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the day-time, and I am set in my ward whole nights. 9. And behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground. 10. O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the LORD of hosts the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.

We had one burden of Babylon before, *chap. xiii.* here we have another prediction of its fall; which God saw fit thus to possess his people with the belief of by line u. on line, because Babylon sometimes pretended to be a friend to them, *Isa. xxxix. 1.* and God would hereby warn them not to trust to that friendship; and sometimes was really an enemy to them, and God would hereby warn them not to be afraid of that enmity. Babylon is marked for ruin, and all that believe God's prophet can, through that glass, see it tumbling, even then when with an eye of sense they saw it flourishing and sitting as a queen.

Babylon is here called the desert or plain of the sea, for it was a flat country, and full of lakes or loughs (as they call them in Ireland) like little seas, and was abundantly watered by the many streams of the river Euphrates. Babylon did but now begin to be famous, Nineveh having outshined it while the monarchy was in the Assyrian hands; but in a little time it became the lady of kingdoms; and before it arrived at that pitch of

eminency which it was at in Nebuchadnezzar's time, God by this prophet plainly foretold its fall, again and again, that his people might not be terrified at its rise, nor despair of relief in due time when they were its prisoner, *Job v. 3. Psalm xxxii. 35, 36.* Some think it is here called a desert, because though it was now a populous city it should in time be made a desert. And therefore the destruction of Babylon is so often prophesied of by this evangelical prophet, because it was typical of the destruction of the man of sin, the great enemy of the New Testament church, which is foretold in the *Revelations* in many expressions borrowed from these prophecies, which therefore must be consulted and collated by those who would understand the prophecy of that book.

Here is, 1. The powerful, irruptions and descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon Babylon, *ver. 1, 2.* They will come from the desert, from a terrible land; the northern parts of Media and Persia, where their soldiers were mostly bred, was waste and mountainous; terrible to strangers that were to pass through it, and producing soldiers that were very formidable. Elam, i. e. Persia, is summoned to go up against Babylon, and in conjunction with the forces of Media to besiege it; when God hath work of this kind to do, he will find, though it be in a desert, in a terrible land, proper instruments to be employed in it. These forces come as whirlwinds from the south, so suddenly, so strongly, and so terribly; such a mighty noise shall they make, and throw down every thing that stands in their way. As is usual in such a case, some deserters will go over to them, the treacherous dealers will deal treacherously; historians tell us of Gadatas and Gobryas, two great officers of the king of Babylon, that went over to Cyrus, and being well acquainted with all the avenues of the city, let a party directly to that palace, where Belshazzar was slain: thus with the help of the treacherous dealers, the spoiler spoiled. Some read it thus, There shall be a deceiver of that deceiver, viz. Babylon, and a spoiler of that spoiler. Or, which comes all to one, The treacherous dealer has found one that deals treacherously, and the spoiler one that spoileth, as it is expounded, *chap. xxxiii. 1.* The Persians shall pay the Babylonians in their own coin; they that by fraud and violence, cheating and plundering, by unrighteous wars and dreadful treaties have made a prey of their neighbours, shall meet with their match, and by the same methods shall themselves be made a prey of.

2. The different impressions made hereby upon those concerned in Babylon.

(1.) To the poor oppressed captives it would be welcome news: for they had been told long ago that Babylon's destroyer would be their deliverer; and therefore when they hear that Elam and Media are coming up to besiege Babylon, all their fighting will be made to cease, they shall no longer mingle their tears with Euphrates' streams, but resume their harps, and smile when they remember Zion, which before they wept at the thought of. For the fighting of the needy the God of pity will arise in due time, *Psal. xii. 5.* he will break the yoke from off their neck, will remove the rod of the wicked from off their lot, and to make their fighting to cease.

(2.) To the proud oppressors it would be a grievous vision, *ver. 2.* particularly to the king of Babylon for the time being, and it should seem that he it is that is here brought in sadly lamenting his inevitable fate, *ver. 3, 4.* Therefore are my lions filled with pain, pangs have taken hold upon me, &c. which was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for that very night in which his city was taken and himself slain, upon the sight of a hand writing mystic characters upon the wall, his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another, *Dan. v. 6.* and yet that was but the beginning of sorrows; Daniel's deciphering of the writing could not but increase his terror, and the alarm which immediately followed of the executioners at the door would be the completing of it. And those words, The night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear to me, plainly refer to that aggravating circumstance of Belshazzar's fall, that he was slain on that night when he was in the height of his mirth and jollity, with his cups and concubines about him, and a thousand of his lords revelling with him; that night of his pleasure when he promised himself an undisturbed, unallayed enjoyment of the most exquisite gratifications of sense, with a particular defiance of God and religion in the profanation of the temple vessels, that was the night that was turned into all this fear. Let this give an effectual check to vain mirth and sensual pleasures, and forbid us ever to lay the reins in the neck of them, that we know not what heaviness the mirth may end in, nor how soon laughter may be turned into mourning; but this we know, that for all these things God shall bring us into judgment; let us therefore mix trembling always with our joys.

1. A representation of the posture in which Babylon should be found when the enemy should surprise it; all in festival gaiety, *ver. 5.* Prepare the table with all manner of dainties; set the guards, let them watch in the watch-tower, while we eat and drink securely and make merry: and if any alarm should be given, the princes shall arise and anoint the shield, and be in a readiness to give the enemy a warm reception. Thus secure are they, and thus do they gird on the harness with as much joy as if they had put it off.

2. A description of the alarm which should be given to Babylon, upon its being forced by Cyrus and Darius. The Lord in vision shewed the prophet the watchman set in his watch-tower, near the palace, as is usual in times of danger; the king ordered those about him to post a sentinel in the most advantageous place for discovery, and according to the duty of a watchman, let him declare what he sees, *ver. 6.* We read of watchmen thus set to receive intelligence in the story of David, *2 Sam. xviii. 24.* and in the story of Jehu, *2 Kings ix. 17.* This watchman here discovered a chariot with a couple of horsemen attending it, in which we may suppose the commander in chief to ride; he then saw another chariot drawn by asses or mules, which were much in use among the Persians, and a chariot drawn by camels, which were likewise much in use among the Medes; so that (as Grotius thinks) these two chariots signify the two nations combined against Babylon: or rather, these chariots come to bring tidings to the palace; compare *Jer. li. 21—32.* One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, while he is revelling at the other end, and knows nothing of the matter. This watchman seeing these chariots at some distance, harkened diligently with much heed, to receive the first tidings. And, *ver. 8.* he cried, a lion; this word coming out of a watchman's mouth, no doubt gave them a certain sound, and every body knew the meaning of it, though we do not know it now. It was likely it was intended to raise attention; he that has an ear to hear let him hear, as when a lion roars: or he cried as a lion; very loud and in good earnest; the occasion being very urgent. And what has he to say? (1.) He professeth his constancy to his post assigned him, I stand, my Lord, continually upon the watch tower, and have never discovered any thing material, till just now: all seemed safe and quiet. Some make it to be a complaint to the people of God, that they had long expected the downfall of Babylon, according to the prophecy, and it was not yet come; but withal a resolution to continue waiting, as *Heb. ii. 1.* I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, to see what will be the issue of the present providences. (2.) He gives notice of the discoveries he had

sun was worshipped, the most infamous of all the cities of Egypt for idolatry; even there shall be a wonderful reformation; they shall speak the language of Canaan. Or it may be taken thus, as we render it; That for every five cities that shall embrace religion, there shall be one (a sixth part of the cities of Egypt) that shall reject, and that shall be called a city of destruction, because it refuseth the methods of salvation.

2. They shall swear to the Lord of hosts; not only swear by him, giving him the honour of appealing to him, as all nations did to the gods they worshipped, but they shall by a solemn oath and vow devote themselves to his honour, and bind themselves to his service. They shall swear to cleave to him with purpose of heart, and shall worship him, not occasionally, but constantly. They shall swear allegiance to him as their king, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed.

3. They shall set up the public worship of God in their land, *ver. 19.* There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, an altar on which they shall do sacrifice and oblation, *ver. 21.* therefore it must be understood spiritually: Christ the great altar, which sanctifies every gift, shall be owned there, and the gospel sacrifices of prayer and praise shall be offered up; for by the law of Moses, there was to be no other altar for sacrifice but that at Jerusalem. In Christ Jesus all distinction of nations is taken away; and a spiritual altar, a gospel-church in the midst of the land of Egypt, is as acceptable to God as one in the midst of the land of Israel; and spiritual sacrifices of faith and love, and a contrite heart, please the Lord better than an ox or bullock.

4. There shall be a face of religion upon the nation, and an open profession made of it, discernible to all that come among them; not only in the heart of the country, but even in the borders of it, there shall be a pillar, or pillars, inscribed, To Jehovah; to his honour, as before there had been such pillars set up in honour of false gods. As soon as a stranger entered upon the borders of Egypt, he might soon perceive what God they worshipped. Those that serve God must not be ashamed to own him, but be forward to do any thing that may be for a sign and for a witness to the Lord of hosts; that even in the land of Egypt he had some faithful worshippers, who boasted of their relation to him, and made his name their strong tower or bulwark on their borders, with which their coats were fortified against all assailants.

5. Being in distress they shall seek to God, and he shall be found of them; and this shall be a sign and a witness for the Lord of hosts, that he is a God hearing prayer, to all flesh that come to him, *ver. 20.* see *Psal. lxx. 2.* When they cry to God by reason of their oppressors, the cruel lords that shall rule over them, *ver. 4.* he shall be intreated of them, *ver. 22.* whereas he had told his people Israel, who made it their own choice to have such a king, that they should cry to him by reason of their king, and he would not hear them, *1 Sam. viii. 18.*

6. They shall have an interest in the great Redeemer: when they were under the oppression of cruel lords, perhaps God sometimes raised them up mighty deliverers, as he did for Israel in the days of the judges: and by them, though he had smitten the land, he healed it again; and upon their return to God in a way of duty, he returned to them in a way of mercy, and repaired the breaches of their tottering state; for repenting Egyptians shall find the same favour with God that repenting Ninevites did. But all these deliverances wrought for them, as those for Israel, were but figures of gospel salvation. Doubtless, Jesus Christ is the Saviour and the Great One here spoken of, whom God will send the glad tidings of to the Egyptians, and by whom he will deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him without fear, *Luke i. 74, 75.* Jesus Christ delivered the Gentile nations from the service of dumb idols, and did himself both purchase and preach liberty to the captives.

7. The knowledge of God shall prevail among them, *ver. 21.* (1.) They shall have the means of knowledge: for many ages in Judah only was God known for there only were the lively oracles found; but now the Lord and his name shall be known to Egypt. Perhaps this may in part refer to the translation of the Old Testament out of Hebrew into Greek by the LXX, which was done at Alexandria in Egypt, by the command of Ptolemy King of Egypt, and it was the first time that the scriptures were translated into any other language: by the help of this (Grecian monarchy having introduced their language into that country) the Lord was known to Egypt, and a happy omen and means it was of his being farther known, *ver. 1.* They shall have grace to improve those means: it is promised not only that the Lord shall be known to Egypt, but that the Egyptians shall know the Lord; they shall receive and entertain the light granted to them, and shall submit themselves to the power of it. The Lord is known to our nation, and yet I fear there are many of our nation that do not know the Lord. But the promise of the new covenant is, that all shall know the Lord, from the least even to the greatest: which promise is sure to all the seed. The effect of this knowledge of God is, that they shall love a law to the Lord and perform it. For those do not know God aright, who either are not willing to oblige themselves to the Lord, or do not make good those obligations.

8. They shall come into the communion of saints; being joined to the Lord, they shall be added to the church, and be incorporated with all the saints.

1. All enmities shall be slain. Mortal feuds there had been between Egypt and Assyria; they often made war upon one another, but now there shall be a highway between Egypt and Assyria, *ver. 23.* a happy correspondence settled between the two nations; they shall trade with one another, and every thing that passeth between them shall be friendly: The Egyptians shall serve, i. e. worship the true God with the Assyrians; and therefore the Assyrians shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptians into Assyria. Now, it becomes those who have communion with the same God, through the same Mediator, to keep up an amicable correspondence with one another: and the consideration of our meeting at the same throne of grace, and our serving each other in the same business of religion, should put an end to all jealous and animosities, and knit our hearts to each other in holy love.

2. The Gentile nations shall not only unite with each other in the gospel, but under Christ the great shepherd, but they shall all be united with the Jews. When Egypt and Assyria become partners in serving God, Israel shall make a third with them, *ver. 24.* they shall become a threefold cord, *ver. 25.* the ceremonial law, which had long been the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles shall be taken down, and then they shall become a threefold cord under one shepherd. Thus twisted, they shall be a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, *ver. 24, 25.* (1.) Israel shall be a blessing to them all, because of them as concerning the flesh Christ came; and they were the natural branches of the good olive, to whom did originally pertain its root and fatness, and the Gentiles were but grafted in among them, *Rom. xi. 17.* Israel lay between Egypt and Assyria, and was a blessing to them both by bringing them to meet in that word of the Lord which went forth from Jerusalem, and that church which was first set up in the land of Israel: *Qui conveniunt in aliquot tertio, inter se conveniunt.* Israel is that third in whom Egypt and Assyria agree, and is therefore a blessing; for these are rent and great blessings to their generation, who are instrumental to unite all those that have been at variance. (2.) They shall all be a blessing to the world, so the Christian church is made up of Jews and

Gentiles; it is the beauty, riches, and support of the world. (3.) They shall all be blessed of the Lord: 1. They shall all be owned by him as his. Though Egypt was formerly a house of bondage to the people of God, and Assyria an unjust invader of them; yet all this shall now be forgiven and forgotten, and they shall be as welcome to the God of Israel. They are all alike his people whom he takes under his protection: they are formed by him, for they are the work of his hands; not only as a people, but as his children, for they are his inheritance, precious in his eyes and dear to him, and from whom he hath his rent of honour out of this lower world. 1. They shall be owned together by him as jointly his; his in concert: they all share in one and the same blessing. Note, Those that are united in the love and blessing of God, ought for that reason to be united to each other in charity.

C H A P. XX.

This chapter is a prediction of the carrying away of multitudes both of the Egyptians and the Ethiopians into captivity by the king of Assyria. Here is, (1.) The sign by which this was foretold, which was the prophet's going for some time barefoot and almost naked, like a poor captive, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) The explanation of that sign; with application to Egypt and Ethiopia, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* (3.) The good use which the people of God should make of this, which is never to trust in an arm of flesh because thus it will deceive them, *ver. 6.*

1. IN the year that Tartan came into Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him) and fought against Ashdod, and took it; 2. At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose that sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot; and he did so, walking naked and barefoot. 3. And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; 4. So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. 5. And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. 6. And the inhabitants of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?

God here as King of nations, brings a sore calamity upon Egypt and Ethiopia, but as King of saints brings good to his people out of it. Observe,

1. The date of this prophecy: it was in the year that Ashdod, a strong city of the Philistines, (but which some think was lately recovered from them by Hezekiah, when he smote the Philistines even unto Gaza, *2 Kings xviii. 8.*) was besieged and taken by an army of the Assyrians, it is uncertain what year of Hezekiah that was, but the event was so remarkable, that they who lived then could by that token fix the time to a year. He that was now king of Assyria is called Sargon, which some take to be the same with Sennacherib; others think he was his immediate predecessor, and succeeded Shalmaneser: Tartan that was general or commander in chief in this expedition, was one of Sennacherib's officers, sent by him to bid defiance to Hezekiah, in concurrence with Rabshakeh, *2 Kings xviii. 17.*

2. The making of Isaiah a sign by his unusual dress when he walked abroad. He had been a sign to his own people of the melancholy times that were come and coming upon them, by the sackcloth which for some time he had worn, of which he had a gown made which he girt about him. Some think he put himself into that habit of a mourner upon occasion of the captivity of the ten tribes: others think sackcloth was what he commonly wore as a prophet, to shew himself mortified to the world, and that he might learn to endure hardness; suit clothing better become those that attend in king's palaces, *Matt. xi. 8.* than those that go on God's errands. Elijah wore haircloth, *2 Kings i. 8.* and John Baptist, *Matt. xiii. 4.* and those that pretend to be prophets supported their pretension by wearing rough garments, *Zech. xiii. 4.* but Isaiah hath orders given to him to loose his sackcloth from his loins, not to exchange it for better clothing, but for none at all, i. e. no upper garment, no mantle, cloak, or coat, but only that which was next to him; suppose his shirt, waistcoat and drawers; and he must put off his shoes and go barefoot: so that compared with others' dress, and what he himself usually wore, he might be said to go naked. This was a great hardship upon the prophet, it was a blemish to his reputation, and would expose him to contempt and ridicule; the boys in the street would hoot at him, and they who sought occasion against him would say, The prophet is indeed a fool, and the spiritual man is mad, *Hos. ix. 7.* It might likewise be a prejudice to his health, he was in danger of catching a cold, which might throw him into a fever and cost him his life: but God bid him do it, that he might give a proof of his obedience to God in a most difficult command, and so shame the disobedience of his people to the most easy and reasonable precepts. When we are in the way of our duty, we may trust God both with our credit and with our safety. The hearts of that people were strangely stupid, and would not be affected with what they heard only, but must be taught by signs, and therefore Isaiah must do this, for their edification; if the dress was scandalous, yet the ensign was glorious, and what a prophet of the Lord needed not be ashamed of.

3. The exposition of this sign, *ver. 3, 4.* It was intended to signify that the Egyptians and the Ethiopians should be led away captives by the king of Assyria thus stripped, or in rags and very shabby clothing, as Isaiah was. God calls him his servant Isaiah, because in this matter particularly he had approved himself God's willing, faithful, obedient servant; and for this very thing, which perhaps others laughed at him for, God gloried in him. To obey is better than sacrifice, pleaseth God and praiseth him more, and shall be more praised by him. Isaiah is said to have walked naked and barefoot three years, when ever in that time he appeared as a prophet: but some refer the three years not to the sign, but to the thing signified; he hath walked naked and barefoot, there is a stop in the original: suppose he did so once, that was enough to give occasion to all about him to enquire what was the meaning of his doing so: or as some think, he did it three days, a day for a year; and this for a three years' sign and wonder, i. e. for a sign of that which shall be done three years hence, or which shall be three years in the doing. Three campaigns successively shall the Assyrian army make in spoiling the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and carrying them away captive in this barbarous manner; not only the soldiers taken in the field of battle, but the inhabitants young and old; and it being a very piteous

piteous sight, and such as must needs move compassion in those that had the least degree of tenderness left them, to see those who had gone all their days well dressed now stripped, and scarce having rags to cover their nakedness; that circumstance of their captivity is particularly taken notice of and foretold, the more to affect them to whom this prophecy was delivered. It is particularly said to be to the shame of Egypt, *ver. 4.* because the Egyptians were a proud people, and therefore when they did fall into disgrace it was the more shameful to them; and the higher they had lifted up themselves the lower was their fall, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

4. The use and application of this, *ver. 5, 6.*

1. All that had any dependence upon, or correspondence with, Egypt and Ethiopia, should now be ashamed of them, and afraid of having any thing to do with them. Those countries that were in danger of being over-run by the Assyrians, expect that Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, with his numerous forces, should put a stop to the progress of their victorious arms, and be a barrier to his neighbours; and yet with more assurance they gloried that Egypt, a kingdom so famous for policy and prowess, would do their business, would oblige them to raise the siege of Ashdod, and retire with precipitation; but instead of this, by attempting to oppose him, they do but expose themselves and make their country a prey to him. Hereupon all about them are ashamed that ever they promised themselves any advantage by two such weak and cowardly nations, and more afraid now than ever they were of the growing greatness of the king of Assyria, before whom Egypt and Ethiopia proved but as briars and thorns put to stop a consuming fire, which did but make it burn the more strongly. Note, Those who make any creature their expectation and glory, and so put it in the place of God, will sooner or later be ashamed of it, and their disappointment in it will but increase their fear. See *Ezek. xxix. 6, 7.*

2. The Jews in particular should be convinced of their folly in resting upon such broken reeds, and should despair of any relief from them, *ver. 6.* *The inhabitants of this isle,* the land of Judah, situated upon the sea, though not surrounded by it; of this country, so the margin: every one shall now have his eyes opened, and shall say, *Behold, such is our expectation, so vain; so foolish, and this is that which it will come to; we have fled for help to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and have hoped by them to be delivered from the king of Assyria: but now they are broken thus, how shall we escape, that are not able to bring such armies into the field as they did?* Note, 1. Those that confide in creatures will be disappointed, and will be made ashamed of their confidence, *for vain is the help of man, and in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, or the height and multitude of the mountains.*

2. Disappointment in creature confidences, instead of driving us to despair, as here, how shall we escape? should drive us to God, to whom if we flee for help our expectation shall not be frustrated.

CHAPTER XXI.

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Babylon is here called the desert or plain of the sea, for it was a flat country, and full of lakes or lagoons (as they call them in Ireland) like little seas, and was abundantly watered by the many streams of the river Euphrates. Babylon did but now begin to be famous, Nineveh having outshined it while the monarchy was in the Assyrian hands; but in a little time it became the lady of kingdoms; and before it arrived at that pitch of

eminency which it was at in Nebuchadnezzar's time, God by this prophet plainly foretold its fall, again and again, that his people might not be terrified at its rise, nor despair of relief in due time when they were its prisoner, *Job v. 3. Psalm xxxii. 35, 36.* Some think it is here called a desert, because though it was now a populous city it should in time be made a desert. And therefore the destruction of Babylon is so often prophesied of by this evangelical prophet, because it was typical of the destruction of the man of sin, the great enemy of the New Testament church, which is foretold in the *Revelation* in many expressions borrowed from these prophecies, which therefore must be consulted and collated by those who would understand the prophecy of that book.

Here is, 1. The powerful irruptions and descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon Babylon, *ver. 1, 2.* They will come from the desert, from a terrible land; the northern parts of Media and Persia, where their soldiers were mostly bred, was waste and mountainous; terrible to strangers that were to pass through it, and producing soldiers that were very formidable. Elam, i. e. Persia, is foretold to go up against Babylon, and in conjunction with the forces of Media to besiege it: when God hath work of this kind to do, he will find, though it be in a desert, in a terrible land, proper instruments to be employed in it. These forces come as whirlwinds from the south, so suddenly, so strongly, and so terribly; such a mighty noise shall they make, and throw down every thing that stands in their way. As is usual in such a case, some deserters will go over to them, the treacherous dealers will deal treacherously; historians tell us of Gadatas and Gobryas, two great officers of the king of Babylon, that went over to Cyrus, and being well acquainted with all the avenues of the city, let a party directly to that palace, where Belshazzar was slain: thus with the help of the treacherous dealers, the spoiler spoiled. Some will say thus, *There shall be a deliverer of his deceivers,* viz. Belshazzar, a deliverer of that spoiler. Or, which comes all to one, *The treacherous dealer shall find one that deals treacherously, and the spoiler one that spoils,* as it is expounded, *chap. xxxiii. 1.* The Persians shall, as the treacherous dealers, let a party go to that palace, where Belshazzar was slain: thus with the help of the treacherous dealers, the spoiler spoiled. Some will say thus, *There shall be a deliverer of his deceivers,* viz. Belshazzar, a deliverer of that spoiler. Or, which comes all to one, *The treacherous dealer shall find one that deals treacherously, and the spoiler one that spoils,* as it is expounded, *chap. xxxiii. 1.* The Persians shall, as the treacherous dealers, let a party go to that palace, where Belshazzar was slain: thus with the help of the treacherous dealers, the spoiler spoiled. Some will say thus, *There shall be a deliverer of his deceivers,* viz. Belshazzar, a deliverer of that spoiler. Or, which comes all to one, *The treacherous dealer shall find one that deals treacherously, and the spoiler one that spoils,* as it is expounded, *chap. xxxiii. 1.* The Persians shall, as the treacherous dealers, let a party go to that palace, where Belshazzar was slain: thus with the help of the treacherous dealers, the spoiler spoiled.

2. The different impressions made hereby upon those concerned in Babylon.

(1.) To the poor oppressed captives it would be welcome news, for they had been told long ago that Babylon and her tower would be brought down; and therefore when they hear that Elam and Media are coming up to besiege Babylon, all their fighting will be made to cease, they shall no longer mingle their tears with Euphrates' stream, but rejoice that they are delivered when they remember Zion, which before they wept at the thought of. For the fighting of the needy the God of prey will arise in due time, *Ps. lxxviii. 1.* he will break the yoke from off such necks, will remove the rod of the wicked from off the lot, and to make them signing to cease.

(2.) To the proud oppressors it would be a grievous vision, *ver. 2.* particularly to the king of Babylon for the time being, and it should seem that he it is that is here brought in sadly lamenting his inevitable fate, *ver. 3, 4.* *Therefore are my lions filled with pain, pangs have taken hold upon me, &c.* which was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for that very night in which his city was taken and himself slain, upon the sight of a hand writing mystic characters upon the wall, his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another, *Dan. v. 6.* and yet that was but the beginning of sorrows; Daniel's deciphering of the writing could not but increase his terror, and the alarm which immediately followed of the executioners at the door would be the completing of it. And those words, *The night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear to me,* plainly refer to that aggravating circumstance of Belshazzar's fall, that he was slain on that night when he was in the height of his mirth and jollity, with his cups and concubines about him, and a thousand of his lords revelling with him; that night of his pleasure when he promised himself an undisturbed, unalloyed enjoyment of the most exquisite gratifications of sense, with a particular defiance of God and religion in the profanation of the temple vessels, that was the night that was turned into all this fear. Let this give an eternal check to vain mirth and sensual pleasures, and forbid us ever to lay the reins in the neck of them, that we know not what heaviness the mirth may end in, nor how soon laughter may be turned into mourning; but this we know, that for all these things God shall bring us into judgment, let us therefore mix trembling always with our joys.

1. A representation of the posture in which Babylon should be found when the enemy should surprise it; all in festival gaiety, *ver. 5.* Prepare the table with all manner of dainties; let the guards, let them watch in the watch-tower, while we eat and drink securely and make merry: and if any alarm should be given, the princes shall arise and mount the shield, and be in a readiness to give the enemy a warm reception. Thus secure are they, and thus do they gird on the harness with as much joy as if they had put it off.

4. A description of the alarm which should be given to Babylon, upon its being forced by Cyrus and Darius. The Lord in vision showed the prophet the watchman set in his watch-tower, near the palace, as is usual in times of danger; the king ordered those about him to post a sentinel in the most advantageous place for discovery, and according to the duty of a watchman, let him declare what he seeth, *ver. 6.* We read of watchmen thus set to receive intelligence in the story of David, *2 Sam. xviii. 24.* and in the story of Jehu, *2 Kings ix. 17.* This watchman here discovered a chariot with a couple of horsemen attending it, in which we may suppose the commander in chief to ride; he then saw another chariot drawn by asses or mules, which were much in use among the Persians, and a chariot drawn by camels, which were likewise much in use among the Medes; so that (as Grotius thinks) these two chariots signify the two nations combined against Babylon: or rather, these chariots come to bring tidings to the palace; compare *Jer. li. 21—32.* *One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, while he is revelling at the other end, and knows nothing of the matter.* This watchman seeing these chariots at some distance, hearkened diligently with much heed, to receive the first tidings. And, *ver. 8.* *Behold, a lion;* this word coming out of a watchman's mouth, no doubt gave them a certain sound, and every body knew the meaning of it, though we do not know it now. It was likely it was intended to raise attention; he that has an ear to hear let him hear, as when a lion roars: or he cried as a lion, very loud and in good earnest; the occasion being very urgent. And what has he to say? (1.) He protesteth his constancy to his post assigned him, *I stand, my Lord, continually upon the watch-tower,* and have never discovered any thing material, till just now: all seemed safe and quiet. Some make it to be a complaint to the people of God, that they had long expected the downfall of Babylon, according to the prophecy, and it was not yet come; but withal a resolution to continue waiting, as *Isa. li. 1.* *I will guard upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, to see what will be the issue of the present providences.* (2.) He gives notice of the discoveries he had made,

made, ver. 9. Here comes a chariot of men with a couple of horsemen; a vision representing the enemy's entry into the city with all their force; or the tidings brought to the royal palace of it.

5. A certain account is at length given of the overthrow of Babylon. He in the chariot answered and said, (when he heard the watchmen speak) *Babylon is fallen, is fallen!* or, God answered thus to the prophet enquiring concerning the issue of these affairs: it is now come to this, Babylon is surely and irrecoverably fallen; Babylon's business is done now. *All the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.* Babylon was the mother of harlots, i. e. of idolatry, which was one of the grounds of God's quarrel with her; but her idols shall now be so far from protecting her, that some of them shall be broken down to the ground, and others of them that were worth carrying away should go into captivity, and be a burden to the beasts that carried them, *Isa. xlv. 1, 2.*

6. Notice is given to the people of God, who were then captives in Babylon, that this prophecy of the downfall of Babylon was particularly intended for their comfort and encouragement, and they might depend upon it, that it should be accomplished in due season, ver. 10. Observe, (1.) The title the prophet gives them in God's name, *O my threshing, and the corn of my floor*; the prophet calls them his, because they were his countrymen, and such as he had a particular interest in and concern for; but he speaks it as from God, and directs his speech to those that were Israelites indeed, the faithful in the land. Note, 1. The church is God's floor, in which the most valuable fruits and products of this earth are as it were gathered together and laid up. 2. True believers are the corn of God's floor; hypocrites are but as the chaff and straw, which take up a great deal of room, but are of small value; with which the wheat is now mixed, but from which it shall be shortly and for ever separated. 3. The corn of God's floor must expect to be threshed by afflictions and persecutions: God's Israel of old was so, afflicted from her youth, often under the plougher's share, *Psal. cxxxix. 4.* and the thresher's flail. 4. Even then God owns it for his threshing, it is his still; nay, the threshing of it is by his appointment, and under his restraint and direction: The threshers could have no power against it, but what is given them from above. (2.) The assurance he gives them of the truth of what he had delivered to them, which therefore they might build their hopes upon, *That which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, that and nothing else, that and no fiction or fancy of my own, have I declared unto you.* Note, In all events concerning the church, both past, present, and to come, we must have an eye to God, both as the Lord of hosts, and as the God of Israel, who hath power enough to do any thing for his church, and grace enough to do every thing that is for her good; and to the words of his prophets, as what they received from the Lord: And as they dare not smother any thing which he has entrusted them to declare, so they dare not declare any thing as from him which he has not made known to them, *1 Cor. xi. 23.*

11. ¶ The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? 12. The Watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.

This prophecy concerning Dumah is very short, and withal dark and hard to be understood: Some think Dumah is a part of Arabia, and that the inhabitants descended from Dumah the fifth son of Ishmael, as those of Kedar, ver. 16, 17. from Ishmael's second son, *Gen. xxv. 13, 14.* Others because mount Seir is here mentioned, by Dumah understand Idumea, the country of the Idomites. Some or other of Israel's neighbours are certainly meant, whose distress is foretold, not only for warning to them to prepare them for it, but for warning for Israel not to depend upon them, or any of the nations about them, for relief in a time of danger, but upon God only. We must see all creature countenances failing us, and feel them breaking under us, that we may not lay more weight upon them than they will bear. But though the explication of this prophecy be difficult, because we have no history in which we find the accomplishment of it, yet the application will be easy. We have here,

1. A question put by an Edomite to the watchman; some one or other calleth to me out of Seir, somebody that was more concerned for the public safety and welfare than the rest, who were generally careless and secure; as the man of Macedonia, in a vision desired Paul to come over and help them, *Acts xvi. 9.* so this man of mount Seir, in vision, desired the prophet to inform and instruct them. He calleth, not many; it is well there are any, that all are not alike unconcerned about the things that belong to the public peace. Some out of Seir ask advice of God's prophets, and are willing to be taught, when many of God's Israel heed nothing. The question is serious, *What of the night?* It is put to a proper person, the watchman, whose office it is to answer such enquiries: he repeats the question, as one in care, as one in earnest, and desirous to have an answer. Note, 1. God's prophets and ministers are appointed to be watchmen, and we are to look upon them as such: They are as watchmen in the city in a time of peace, to see that all be safe, to knock at every door by personal enquiries; Is it locked? Is the fire safe? to direct those that are at a loss, and check those that are disorderly, *Cont. iii. 3. v. 7.* They are as watchmen in the camp in time of war, *Ezek. xxxiii. 7.* they are to take notice of the motions of the enemy, and to give notice of them; to make discoveries, and then give warning; and in this they must deny themselves. 2. It is our duty to enquire of the watchmen, especially to ask again and again, *What of the night?* for watchmen wake when others sleep. (1.) What time of the night? After a long sleep in sin and security, is it not time to rise, high time to awake out of sleep? *Rom. xiii. 11.* We have a great deal of work to do, a long journey to go; is it not time to be stirring? Watchman what o'clock is it? After a long dark night, is there any hopes of the day dawning? (2.) What tidings of the night? What from the night? so some: What vision has the prophet had to night? we are ready to receive it. Or rather, what occurs to night? What weather is it? What news? We must expect an alarm, and never be secure; the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; we must prepare to receive the alarm, and resolve to keep our ground, and then take the first hint of danger, and to our arms presently, to our spiritual weapons.

2. The watchman's answer to this question: The watchman was neither asleep nor dumb; though it was a man of mount Seir that called to him, he was ready to give him an answer; *The morning comes.* He answers, (1.) By way of prediction; there comes first a morning of light, and peace, and opportunity, you will enjoy one day of comfort more, but afterwards comes a night of trouble and calamity. Note, In the course of God's providence it is usual that morning and night are counterchanged and succeed each other: Is it night? yet the morning comes, and the day-spring knows his place, *Psal. cxxx. 5.* Is it day? yet the night comes also; if there be a morning of youth and health, there will come a night of sickness and old age; if a morning of prosperity in the family, in the public, yet we must

look for changes. But God usually gives a morning of opportunity before he sends a night of calamity, that his own people may be prepared for the storm, and others lest inexcusable. (2.) By way of excitement; if ye will enquire, enquire ye. Note, It is our wisdom to improve the present morning in preparation for the night that is coming after it; enquire, return, come: Be inquisitive, be penitent, be willing and obedient. The manner of expression is very observable; for we are put to our choice what we will do, if ye will enquire, enquire ye; if not, it is at your peril; you cannot say but you have a fair offer made you: We are also urged to be at a point, if you will, say so, and do not stand pausing; what you will do, do quickly, for it is no time to trifle. Those that return and come to God, will find they have a great deal of work to do, and but a little time to do it in, and therefore they have need to be busy.

13. ¶ The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanim. 14. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled. 15. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. 16. For thus hath the LORD said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail: 17. And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar shall be diminished: for the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it.

Arabia was a large country that lay east and southward of the land of Canaan; much of it was possessed by the posterity of Abraham: The Dedanim here mentioned, ver. 13. descended from Dedan, Abraham's son by Keturah; the inhabitants of Tema and Kedar descended from Ishmael, *Gen. xxv. 3—13—15.* The Arabians generally lived in tents, and kept cattle, were a hardy people, inured to labour; probably the Jews depended upon them as a sort of a wall between them and the more warlike eastern nations; and therefore to alarm them, they shall hear the burden of Arabia, and see it sinking under its own burden.

1. A destroying army shall be brought upon them, with a sword, with a drawn sword, with a bow, ready bent; and with all the grievousness of war, ver. 15. It is probable, the king of Assyria, in some of the marches of his formidable and victorious army, took Arabia in his way, and meeting with little resistance, made an easy prey of them. The consideration of the grievousness of war should make us thankful for the blessings of peace.

2. The poor country people will hereby be forced to flee for shelter wherever they can find a place; so that the travelling companies of Dedanim that used to keep the high roads with their carvans, shall be obliged to quit them, and lodge in the forest in Arabia, ver. 3. and shall not have the wonted convenience of their own tents, poor and weather-beaten as they are.

3. They shall stand in need of refreshment, being ready to perish for want of it, in their flight from the invading army; *O ye inhabitants of the land of Tema, (who probably were next neighbours to the companies of Dedanim) bring ye water (so the margin reads it) to him that is thirsty, and prevent with your bread those that flee,* for they are objects of your compassion, they do not wander for wandering sake; nor are they reduced to straits by any extravagance of their own, but they flee from the sword. Tema was a country where water was sometimes a scarce commodity, as we find, *Job vi. 19.* and we may conclude, it would be in a particular manner acceptable to these poor, distressed refugees. Let us learn hence, (1.) To look for distress ourselves; we know not what straits we may be brought into before we die: Those that live in cities, may be forced to lodge in forests; and those may know the want of necessary food, who now eat bread to the full: Our mountain stands not so strong but that it may be moved, rises not so high but that it may be scaled. These Arabians would the better bear these calamities, because in their way of living they had used themselves to hardships. (2.) To look with compassion upon those that are in distress, and with all cheerfulness to relieve them, not knowing how soon their case may be ours: *Bring water to them that are thirsty,* and not only give bread to those that need and ask it, but present those with it that have need, give it them unasked. They that do so, shall find it remembered to their praise, as (according to our reading) it is here remembered to the praise of the land of Tema, they that did bring water to the thirsty, and relieved even those that were on the falling side.

4. All that which is the glory of Kedar shall vanish away and fail: Did they glory in their numerous herds and flocks; they shall all be driven away by the enemy. It seems they were famous above other nations for the use of the bow in battle; but their archers instead of foiling the enemy shall fall themselves, and the residue of their number, when they are reduced to a small number, shall be diminished, ver. 17. their mighty, able-bodied men, and men of spirit too, shall become very few; for they being most forward in the defence of their country, were most exposed, and fell first, either by the enemy's sword or into the enemy's hand. Note, Neither the skill of archers (though they be never so good marksmen) nor the courage of mighty men, can protect a people from the judgments of God, when they come with commission; but rather expose the undertakers: That is poor glory, which will thus quickly come to nothing.

5. All this shall be done in a little time; within one year, according to the years of an hireling; i. e. within one year, precisely reckoned, this judgment shall come upon Kedar: If this fixing of the time be of no great use to us now, because we find not either when the prophecy was delivered, or when it was accomplished; yet it might be of great use to the Arabians then, to awaken them to repentance, that, like the men of Nineveh, they might prevent the judgment, when they were told it was just at the door: Or when it begins to be fulfilled, the business shall be done, be begun and ended in one year's time. God when he pleases, can do a great deal of work in a little time.

6. It is all ratified by the truth of God, ver. 16. Thus hath the Lord said to me; you may take my word for it, that is his word; and we may be sure no word of his shall fall to the ground: And again, ver. 17. The Lord God of Israel hath spoken it; as the God of Israel, in pursuance of his gracious designs concerning them; and we may be sure the strength of Israel will not lie.

C H A P. XXII.

We are now come nearer home, for this chapter is the burden of the valley of vision, i. e. Jerusalem: other places had their burden for the sake of

of their being concerned some way or other with Jerusalem, and were reckoned with either as spiteful enemies, or deceitful friends, to the people of God: but now let Jerusalem bear her own doom. This chapter concerns, 1. The city of Jerusalem itself, and the neighbourhood depending upon it. Here is, (1.) A prophecy of the grievous distress they should shortly be brought into, by Sennacherib's invasion of the country, and laying siege to the city, ver. 1—7. (2.) A reproof given them for their miscarriage in that distress, in two things, (1.) Not having an eye to God in the use of the means of their preservation, ver. 8—11. (2.) Not humbling themselves under his mighty hand, ver. 12—14. 2. The court of Hezekiah, and the officers of that court: (1.) The displacing of Shebna, an ill man; and turning him out of the treasury, ver. 15—19—25. (2.) The preferring of Eliakim to his place, who would do his country better service, ver. 20—24.

1. **T**HE burden of the valley of vision. What taileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the house tops? 2. Thou that art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city: thy slain men are not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle. 3. All thy rulers are fled together, they are bound by the archers: all that are found in thee are bound together, which have fled from far. 4. Therefore said I, Look away from me, I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me: because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. 5. For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord GOD of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains. 9. And Elam bare the quiver with chariots of men and horsemen, and Kir uncovered the shield. 7. And it shall come to pass that thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate.

The title of this prophecy is very observable, it is the burden of the valley of vision: of Judah and Jerusalem; so all agree. Fitly enough is Jerusalem called a valley, for the mountains were round about it; and the land of Judah abounded with fruitful valleys: And by the judgments of God, though they had been as a towering mountain, they should be brought low, sunk, and depressed, and become dark and dirty as a valley. But most emphatically it is called a valley of vision, because there God was known, and his name great; there the prophets were made acquainted with his mind by visions; and there the people saw the goings of their God and King in his sanctuary. Babylon being a stranger to God, though rich and great, was called the desert of the sea, but Jerusalem being intrusted with his oracles, is a valley of vision; *Blessed are thine eyes for thyself*, and they have seers by office among them. Where Bibles and ministers are, there is a valley of vision, from which is expected fruit accordingly; but here is a burden of the valley of vision, and a heavy burden it is. Note, Church privileges, if they be not improved, will not secure men from the judgments of God; *You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you*; The valley of vision has a particular burden; *Thou Capernaum*, Matt. xi. 23. The higher any are lifted up in means and mercies, the heavier will their doom be if they abuse them.

Now the burden of the valley of vision here, is not that which will quite ruin it, but only frighten it; for it refers not to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, but to the attempt made upon it by Sennacherib, which we had the prophecy of, chap. x. and shall meet with the history of, chap. xxxvi. It is here again prophesied of, because the desolations of many of the neighbouring countries which were foretold in the foregoing chapters, were to be brought to pass by the Assyrian army; now let Jerusalem know, that when the cup is going round, it will be put into her hand, and though it will not be to her a fatal cup, yet it will be a cup of trembling. Here is foretold,

1. The consternation that the city should be in, upon the approach of Sennacherib's army: It used to be full of stirs, a city of great trade, people hurrying to and fro about their business, a tumultuous city, populous and noisy; where there is great trade, there is great tumult: It used to be a joyous, revelling city, what with the busy part, and what with the merry part of mankind; places of concourse are places of noise. But what ails thee now, that the shops are quitted, there is no more walking in the streets and exchange, but thou art wholly gone up to the house-tops? ver. 1. to bemoan thyself in silence and solitude, or to secure thyself from the enemy, or to look abroad, and see if any succours come to thy relief, or which way the enemy's motions are? Let both men of business and sportsmen rejoice as though they rejoiced not, for something may happen quickly which they little think of, that will be a damp to their mirth, and a stop to their business, and send them to watch as a sparrow alone upon the house-top, Psal. cii. 7.

But why is Jerusalem in such a fright? Her slain men are not slain with the sword, ver. 2. But, (1.) Slain with famine, so some; for Sennacherib's army having laid the country waste, and destroyed the fruits of the earth, provisions must needs be very scarce and dear in the city, which would be the death of many of the poorer sort of people; would be constrained to feed on that which was unwholesome. (2.) Slain with fear; they were put into this mighty-fright, though they had not a man killed, but so disheartened themselves, that they seemed as effectually stabbed with fear, as if they had been run through with a sword.

2. The inglorious flight of the rulers of Judah, which fled from far, i. e. from all parts of the country to Jerusalem, ver. 3. fled together, as it were by consent, and were found in Jerusalem, having left their respective cities, which they should have taken care of, to be a prey to the Assyrian army, which, meeting with no opposition, when it came up against all the defended cities of Judah, easily took them, chap. xxxvi. 1. These rulers were bound from the bow, so the word is; they not only quitted their own cities like cowards, but when they came to Jerusalem were of no service there, but were as if their hands were tied from the use of the bow, by the extreme distraction and confusion they were in; they trembled so that they could not draw a bow. See how easily God can dispirit men, and how certainly fear will do it, when the tyranny of it is yielded to.

3. The great grief which this should occasion to all serious, sensible people among them; which is represented by the prophet's laying the thing to heart himself; he lived to see it, and was resolved to share with the children of his people in their sorrow, ver. 4, 5. he is not willing to proclaim his sorrow, and therefore bids those about him to look away from him; he will abandon himself to grief, and indulge himself in it, will weep secretly, but weep bitterly, and will have none go about to comfort him, for his

grief is obstinate, and he is pleased with his pain. But what is the occasion of his grief; a poor prophet had little to lose, and had been injured to hardship, when he walked naked and barefoot: but it is for the spoiling of the daughter of his people. Note, Public grievances should be our griefs: It is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity; our enemies trouble us, and tread us down, and our friends are perplexed, and know not what course to take to do us a kindness; the Lord God of hosts is now contending with the valley of vision; the enemies with their battering runs are breaking down the walls, and we are in vain crying to the mountains to keep off the enemy, or to fall on us and cover us; or looking for help to come to us over the mountains: Or appealing as God doth to the mountains, to hear our controversy, *Micah vi. 1.* and to judge between us and our injurious neighbours.

4. The great numbers and strength of the enemy, that should invade their country and besiege their city, ver. 6, 7. Elam, i. e. the Persians, come with their quiver full of arrows, and with chariots of fighting men and horsemen; Kir, i. e. the Medes, muster up their arms, unsheath the sword, and uncover the shield, and get every thing ready for battle, every thing ready for the besieging of Jerusalem: then the choice valleys about Jerusalem, that used to be clothed with flocks and covered over with corn, shall be full of chariots of war, and at the gate of the city the horsemen shall set themselves in array, to cut off all provisions from going in, and to force their way in. What a condition must the city be in that was beset on all sides with an army?

8. ¶ And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. 9. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many; and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. 13. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. 11. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls, for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago. 12. And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth. 13. And behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. 14. And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

What is meant by the covering of Judah, which in the beginning of this paragraph is said to be discovered, is not agreed. The fenced cities of Judah were a covering to the country; but those being taken by the army of the Assyrians, they ceased to be a shelter; so that the whole country lay exposed to be plundered. The weakness of Judah, its nakedness and inability to help itself, now appeared more than ever; and thus the covering of Judah was discovered. Its magazines and stores that had been locked up, were now laid open for the public use. Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of it, that by this distress into which Judah should be brought, God would discover their covering, i. e. unclike their hypocrisy, would shew all that was in their heart, as is said of Hezekiah upon another occasion, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Now they discovered both their carnal confidence, ver. 9. and their carnal security, ver. 12. Thus by one mean or other the iniquity of Ephraim will be discovered, and the sin of Samaria, Hosea vii. 1.

They were now in a great fright, and in this fright they discovered two things much amiss:

1. A great contempt of God's goodness and his power to help them. They made use of all the means they could think of for their own preservation; and it is not that that they are blamed for, but in doing this they did not acknowledge God. Observe,

(1.) How careful they were to improve all advantages that might contribute to their safety. When Sennacherib had made himself master of all the defended cities of Judah, and Jerusalem was left as a cottage in a vineyard, they thought it was time to look about them; a council was presently called, a council of war: and it was resolved to stand upon their defence, and not tamely to surrender. Pursuant to this resolve, they took all the prudent measures they could for their own security. We tempt God, if in times of danger we do not the best we can for ourselves. (1.) They inspected the magazines and stores, to see if they were well stocked with arms and ammunition: they looked to the armour of the house of the forest, which Solomon built in Jerusalem for an armour, 1 Kings x. 17. and from thence they delivered out what they had occasion for. It is the wisdom of princes in times of peace to provide for war, that they may not have arms to seek when they should use them, and perhaps upon a sudden emergency. (2.) They viewed the fortifications, the breaches of the city of David; they walked round the walls, and observed where they were gone to decay for want of seasonable repairs, or broken by some former attempts made upon them. These breaches were many, the more shame for the house of David that they suffered the city of David to lie neglected. It is likely they had seen those breaches many a time, but now they saw them to consider what course to take about them. This good we should get by public distresses, we should be awakened by them to repair our breaches and amend what is amiss. (3.) They made sure of water for the city, and did what they could to deprive the besiegers of it; ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool, which it is likely there was no great store of, and therefore they were the more concerned to be good husbands of. See what a mercy it is, that as nothing is more necessary to the support of human life than water, so nothing is more cheap and common; but it is bad indeed when that, as here, is a scarce commodity. (4.) They numbered the houses of Jerusalem, that every house might send in their quota of men for the public service, or contribute in money to it: which they raised by a poll, so much a head or so much a house. (5.) Because private property ought to give way to the public safety, those houses that stood in the way when the wall was to be fortified, were broken down: which in such a case of necessity is no more an injury to the owner, than blowing up houses in case of fire. (6.) They made a ditch between the outer and inner wall, for the greater security of the city; and they contrived to draw the water of the old pool to it, that they might have plenty of water themselves, and might deprive the besiegers of it; for (it seems) that was the project, lest the Assyrian army should come and find much water, 2 Chron. xxxii. 4. and so should be the better able to prolong the siege. If it be lawful to destroy the forage of a country

country, much more to divert the streams of its waters, for the straitening and flaying of an enemy.

(2.) How regardless they were of God in all these preparations: *But ye have not looked unto the maker thereof*; i. e. of Jerusalem, the city you are so fully tenacious for the defence of; and of all the advantages which nature has furnished it with for its defence; the mountains round about it, Psa. cxxv. 2. and the rivers, which were such as the inhabitants might turn which way they pleased for their convenience. Note, 1. It is God that made his Jerusalem, and fashioned it along ago, in his counsels. The Jewish writers upon this place say, there were seven things which God made before the world; meaning which he had in his eye when he made the world; *the garden of Eden, the law, the just ones, Israel, the throne of glory, Eliakim, and Messiah the prince.* The gospel-church has God for its maker. 2. Whatever service we do or endeavour to do at any time to God's Jerusalem, it must be with an eye to him as the maker of it; and he takes it ill if we do not. That it is that is charged upon them here; they did not look to God, i. e. (2.) They did not design his glory in what they did. They fortified Jerusalem because it was a rich city, and their own houses were in it; not because it was the holy city, and God's house was in it. In all our cares for the defence of the church we must look more at God's interests in it than at our own. (2.) They did not depend upon him for a blessing upon their endeavours, saw no need of it, and therefore sought not to him for it; but thought their own powers and policies sufficient for them. Of Hezekiah himself it is said, that he trusted in God, 2 Kings xviii. 5, and particularly upon this occasion, 2 Chron. xxxii. 8. but there were those about him, it seems, that were great statesmen and soldiers, but had little religion in them. (2.) They did not give him thanks for the advantages they had in fortifying their city from the waters of the old pool, which were fashioned long ago, as Kithon is called an ancient river, Judges v. 21. Whatever in nature is at any time serviceable to us, we must therein acknowledge the goodness of the God of nature; who when he fashioned it long ago, fitted to be so, and according to whose ordinance it continued to this day. Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and therefore whatever use it is of to us, we must look at him that fashioned it, bless him for it, and use it for him.

2. A great contempt of God's wrath and justice in contending with them, ver. 12, 13, 14. Where observe,

1. What was God's design in bringing this calamity upon them: it was to humble them, bring them to repentance, and make them serious. In that day of trouble, and treading-down, and perplexity, the Lord did thereby call to weeping and mourning, and all the expressions of sorrow, even to balm and *girding with sackcloth*; and all this both to lament their sins, by which they had brought those judgments upon their land; and to entice their prayers, by which they might hope to avert the judgments that were breaking in; and to dispose themselves to a reformation of their lives, by a holy mourning and tenderness of heart under the word of God. To this God called them by his prophet's explaining his providences, and by his providences awakening them to regard what his prophets said. Note, When God threatens us with his judgments he expects and requires that we humble ourselves under his mighty hand; that we tremble when the lions roar, and in a day of adversity consider.

2. How contrary they walked to this design of God, ver. 13. *Behold joy and gladness, mirth and feasting, all the gaiety, and all the jollity imaginable*; they were as secure and pleasant as they used to be, as if they had had no enemy in their borders, or were in no danger of falling into his hands. When they had taken the necessary precautions for their security, then they set all deaths and dangers at defiance, and resolved to be merry, let come on them what would. They that should have been among the mourners, were among the wine-bibbers, the riotous eaters of flesh; and observe what they said, *let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.* This may refer either to the particular danger they were now in, and the fair warning which the prophet gave them for it; or to the general shortness and uncertainty of human life, and the nearness of death at all times. This was the language of the profane scorners who mocked the messengers of the Lord, and misused his prophets. (1.) They made a jest of dying; the prophet tells us we must die shortly, perhaps to-morrow, and therefore we should mourn and repent to-day; no, rather *let us eat and drink*, that we may be fattened for the slaughter, and may be in good heart to meet our doom: if we must have a short life, let it be a merry one. (2.) They ridiculed the doctrine of a future state on the other side death; for if there were no such state, the apostle grants there would be something of reason in what they said, 1 Cor. xv. 32. If when we die there were an end of us, it were good to make ourselves as easy and merry as we could while we live; but if for all those things God shall bring us into judgment, it is at our peril if we walk in the van of our heart and the sight of our eyes, Eccl. xi. 9. Note, A practical disbelief of another life after this, is at the bottom of that carnal security and brutish sensuality, which is the sin, and shame, and ruin, of so a great a part of mankind, as of the old world, who were eating and drinking till the flood came.

3. How much God was displeased at it: he signified his resentment of it to the prophet, revealed it in his ears, to be by him proclaimed upon the house-top; *surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die*, ver. 14. It shall never be expiated with sacrifice and offering, no more than the iniquity of the house of Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 14. It is a sin against the remedy, a baffling of the utmost means of conviction, and rendering them ineffectual; and therefore it is not likely they should ever repent of it or have it pardoned. The Chaldee reads it, *it shall not be forgiven you till you die the second death.* Those that walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to them; with the sword he will slay himself toward.

15. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say, 16. What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock? 17. Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. 18. He will surely violently turn and toss thee, like a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. 19. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down. 20. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah. 21. And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him

with thy girdle; and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. 22. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. 23. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. 24. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all the vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flaggons. 25. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it.

We have here a prophecy concerning the displacing of Shebna, a great officer at court, and the preferring of Eliakim to that post of honour and trust that he was in. Such changes are common in the courts of princes, it is therefore strange that so much notice should be taken of it by the prophet here: but by the accomplishment of what was foretold concerning these particular persons, God designed to confirm his word in the mouth of Isaiah concerning other and greater events: and it is likewise to shew, that as God hath burdens in store for those nations and kingdoms abroad that are open enemies to his church and people; so he hath for those particular persons at home, that are false friends to them and betray them. It is likewise a confirmation in general of the hand of divine providence in all events of this kind, which to us seem contingent, and to depend upon the wills and fancies of princes: *promotion comes neither from the east nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge*, Psa. lxxv. 6, 7. It is probable this prophecy was delivered at the same time with that in the former part of the chapter, and began to be fulfilled before Sennacherib's invasion; for now Shebna was over the house, but Eliakim was, Isa. xxxvi. 3. and Shebna, coming down gradually, was only scribe. Here is,

1. The prophecy of Shebna's disgrace: he is called *this treasurer*, being intrusted with management of the revenue; and he is likewise said to be *over the house*: for such was his boundless ambition and covetousness, that less than two places, and those two of the greatest importance at court, would not content him. It is common for self-seeking men thus to grasp at more than they can manage: and so the business of their places is neglected, while the pomp and profit of them is wholly regarded. It doth not appear what were the particular instances of Shebna's mal-administration for which Isaiah is here sent to prophecy against him; but the Jews say, he kept up a traitorous correspondence with the king of Assyria, and was in treaty with him to deliver the city into his hands. However it was, it should seem he was a foreigner, for we never read of the name of his father, and that he was an enemy to the true interests of Judah and Jerusalem; and it is likely he was first preferred by Ahaz. Hezekiah was himself an excellent good prince; but the best masters cannot always be sure of good servants: we have need to pray for princes, that they may be wise and happy in the choice of those they trust. These were times of reformation, yet Shebna, an ill man, complied so far as to keep his places at court; and it is probable many others did like him, for which reason Sennacherib is said to have been sent against an hypocritical nation, Isa. x. 6. In this message to Shebna we have,

1. A reproof of his pride, vanity, and security, ver. 16. *What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here?* What a mighty noise and bustle dost thou make? What estate hast thou here that thou wast born to? *Whom hast thou here?* what relations that thou art allied to? Art thou not of mean and obscure original, *filius populi*, that comest we know not from whence? What is the meaning of this then, that thou hast built thee a fine house, hast gravest thee a habitation? So very nice and curious was it, that it seemed rather to be the work of an engraver, than of a mason or carpenter. And it seemed engraven in a rock; so firmly was it founded, and so impregnable was it. Nay, thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre; as if he designed that his pomp should survive his funeral. Though Jerusalem was not the place of his father's sepulchres, as Nehemiah called it with a great deal of tenderness, Neh. ii. 3. he designed it should be the place of his own; and therefore set up a monument for himself in his life-time, set it up on high. They that make stately monuments for their pride forget, that how beautiful soever they appear outwardly, within they are full of dead men's bones; but it is pity the grave-stone should forget the grave.

2. A prophecy of his fall and the fallying of his glory. 1. That he should now presently be displaced and degraded, ver. 19. *I will drive thee from thy station*: high places are slippery places; and those are justly deprived of their honour that are proud of it, are pulled up with it; and deprived of their power that do hurt with it. God will do it, who shews himself to be God by looking upon proud men and abusing them, Job xl. 17. To this verse 25 refers, *The nail that is now fastened in a sure place, i. e. Shebna, who thinks himself immovably fixed in this office, shall be removed, and be cut down, and fall.* Those are mistaken who think any place in this world a sure place, or themselves as nails fastened in it; for there is nothing here but uncertainty. When the nail falls, the burden that was upon it is cut off; when Shebna was disgraced, all that had a dependence upon him fell into contempt too. Those that are in high places will have many hanging upon them, as favourites whom they are proud of and trust to: but they are burdens upon them, and perhaps with their weight break the nail and both fall together, and by deceiving ruin one another: the common fate of great men and their flatterers, who expect more from each other than either perform.

2. That after a while he should not only be driven from his station, but driven his country: *The Lord will carry thee away with the captivity of a mighty man*, ver. 17, 18. Some think the Assyrians seized him and took him away, because he had promised to assist them and did not, but appeared against them: or perhaps Hezekiah finding out his treachery, banished him, or forbade him, ever to return: or he himself finding that he was become obnoxious to the people, withdrew into some other country, and there spent the rest of his days in meannefs and obscurity. Grotius thinks he was stricken with a leprosy, which was a disease commonly supposed to come from the immediate hand of God's displeasure, particularly for the punishment of the proud, as in the case of Miriam and Uziah; and by reason of this disease he was tossed like a ball out of Jerusalem. Those that when they are in power turn and toss others, will be justly turned and tossed themselves when their day shall come to fall. Many that have thought themselves fastened like a nail, may come to be tossed like a ball,

for

for here we have no continuing city. Shebna thought his place too straight for him, he had no room to thrive: God will therefore send him into a large country where he shall have no room to wander, but never find the way back again; for there he shall die, and lay his bones there, and not in the sepulchre he had hewn out for himself. And there the chariots that had been the chariots of his glory, in which he had rattled about the streets of Jerusalem, and which he took into banishment with him, should but serve to upbraid him with his former grandeur, to the shame of his lord's house, of the court of Ahaz, that had advanced him.

2. The prophecy of Eliakim's advancement, *ver. 20, &c.* He is God's servant, has approved himself faithfully in other employments, and therefore God will call him to this high station. Those that are diligent in doing the duty of a low sphere, stand fairest for preferment in God's books. Eliakim doth not undermine Shebna, or make an interest against him, nor doth he intrude into his office; but God calls him to it; and what God calls us to, we may expect he will own us in.

It is here foretold,

1. That Eliakim should be put into Shebna's place of lord-chamberlain of the household, lord-treasurer, and prime minister of state. The prophet must tell Shebna this, *ver. 21.* He shall have thy robe, the badge of honour; and thy girdle, the badge of power; for he shall have thy government. To hear it would be a great mortification to Shebna, much more to see it. Great men, especially if proud men, cannot endure their successors. God undertakes the doing of it, not only because he would put it into the heart of Hezekiah to do it, and his hand must be acknowledged guiding the hearts of princes in placing and displacing men, *Prov. xxi. 1.* but because the powers that be, subordinate as well as supreme, are ordained of God. It is God that clothes princes with their robes, and therefore we must submit ourselves to them for the Lord's sake, and with an eye to him, *1 Pet. ii. 13.* And since it is he that commits the government into their hand, they must administer it according to his will for his glory; must judge for him, by whom they judge and decree justice, *Prov. viii. 15.* And they may depend upon him to furnish them for what he calls them to; according to the promise here, *I will clothe him;* and then it follows, *I will strengthen him.* Those that are called to places of trust and power, should seek unto God for grace to enable them to do the duty of their places, for that ought to be their chief care.

Eliakim's advancement is farther described by the laying of the key of the house of David on his shoulder, *ver. 22.* Probably he carried a golden key upon his shoulder as a badge of his office, or had one embroidered upon his cloke or robe, to which this alludes. Being over the house, and having the key delivered to him, as the seals are to the lord keeper, *he shall open and none shall shut, shut and none shall open.* He had access to the house of the precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices; and to the house of the armour and the treasures, *Isa. xxxix. 2.* and disposed of the stores there as he thought fit for the public service. He put whom he pleased into the inferior offices, and turned out whom he pleased. Our Lord Jesus describes his own power as Mediator by an allusion to this, *Rev. iii. 7.* that he hath the key of David wherewith he opens and no man shuts, he shuts and no man opens: his power in the kingdom of heaven, and in the ordering of all the affairs of that kingdom, is absolute, irresistible, and uncontrollable.

2. That he should be fixed and confirmed in that office: he shall have it for life, and not *durante bene placito*, *ver. 23.* *I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place;* not to be removed or cut down. Thus lasting shall the honour be that comes from God to all those that use it for him. Our Lord Jesus is *as a nail in a sure place:* his kingdom cannot be shaken, and he himself is still the same.

3. That he should be a great blessing in his office; and that is it that crowns the favours here conferred upon him: *God makes his name great, for he shall be a blessing, Gen. xii. 2.*

1. He shall be a blessing to his country, *ver. 21.* *He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.* He shall take care not only of the affairs of the king's household, but of all the public interests in Jerusalem and Judah. Note, Rulers should be fathers to those that are under their government; to teach them with wisdom, rule them with love, and correct what is amiss with tenderness; to protect them and provide for them, and be solicitous about them as a man is for his own children and family. It is happy with a people when neither court, nor city, nor country, have any separate interests, but all center in the same: so that the courtiers are true patriots; and whom the court blesteth, the country has reason to blest too; and when those who are fathers to Jerusalem the royal city, are no less so to the house of Judah.

2. He shall be a blessing to his family, *ver. 23, 24.* *He shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house* that consummate wisdom and virtue which recommended him to this great trust, made him the honour of his family: which probably was very considerable before, but now become much more so. Children should aim to be a credit to their parents and relations. The honour men reflect upon their families by their piety and usefulness, is more to be valued than that which they derive from their families by their names and titles.

Eliakim being preferred, *all the glory of his father's house* was hanged upon him; they all made their court to him, and his brethren's sheaves bowed to his. Observe, The glory of this world gives a man no intrinsic worth or excellency; it is but hung upon him as an appurtenance, and it will soon drop from him. Eliakim was compared to *a nail in a sure place;* in pursuance of which comparison all the relations of his family, which it is likely were numerous, and that was the glory of it, are said to have a dependence upon him; as in a house the vessels that have handles to them are hung up upon nails and pins. It intimates likewise, that he shall generously take care of them all, and bear the weight of that care: all the vessels, not only the flagons, but the cups, the vessels, of small quantity, the meanest that belonged to his family, shall be provided for by him. See what a burden they bring upon themselves that undertake great trusts; they little think how many and how much will hang upon them, if they resolve to be faithful in the discharge of their trust. Our Lord Jesus having the key of the house of David, is as *a nail in a sure place,* and all the glory of his father's house hangs upon him, is derived from him, and depends upon him; even the meanest that belong to his church are welcome to him, and he is able to bear the stress of them all. That soul cannot perish, nor that concern fall to the ground, though never so weighty, that is by faith hung upon Christ.

C H A P. XXIII.

This chapter is concerning Tyre, an ancient wealthy city, situated upon the sea, and for many ages one of the most celebrated cities for trade and merchandise in those parts of the world. The lot of the tribe of Asher bordered upon it, *Joshua xix. 29.* where it is called the strong city Tyre. We seldom find it any thing of a dangerous enemy to Israel, but sometimes their faithful ally, as in the reigns of David and Solomon: for trading cities maintain their grandeur, not by conquests of

their neighbours, but by commerce with them. In this chapter is foretold, (1.) The lamentable desolation of Tyre, which was performed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army, about the same time that they destroyed Jerusalem, and a hard task they had of it, as appears *Ezek. xxix. 18.* where they are said to have served a hard service against Tyre, and yet to have no wages, *ver. 1—14.* (2.) The restoration of Tyre after seventy years, and the return of the Tyrians out of their captivity to their trade again, *ver. 15—18.*

1. **T**HE burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them. 2. Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. 3. And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations: 4. ¶ Be thou ashamed, O Zidon; for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins. 5. As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre. 6. Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. 7. Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn. 8. Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? 9. The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. 10. Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no more strength. 11. He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant-city, to destroy the strongholds thereof. 12. And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest. 13. Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwelt in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin. 14. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.

Tyre being a sea-port town, this prophecy of its overthrow fitly begins and ends with, *Howl, ye ships of Tarshish;* for all its business, wealth, and honour, depended upon its shipping; if that be ruined, they are all undone.

Observe, 1. Tyre flourishing. This is taken notice of that her fall may appear the more dismal: (1.) The merchants of Zidon that traded at sea had at first replenished her, *ver. 2.* Zidon was the more ancient city, situate upon the same sea-coast, a few leagues more to the north, and Tyre was at first only a colony of that: but the daughter had outgrown the mother, and was become much more considerable. It may be a mortification to great cities to think how they were at first replenished. (2.) Egypt had helped very much to raise her, *ver. 3.* Sihor was the river of Egypt: by that river and the ocean into which it run, the Egyptians traded with Tyre; and the harvest of that river was her revenue. The riches of the sea, and the gains by goods exported and imported, are as much to trading towns, as that of hay and corn is to the country; and sometimes the harvest of the river proves a better revenue than the harvest of the land. Or it may be meant of all the products of the Egyptian soil, which the men of Tyre traded in, and which were the harvest of the river Nile, owing themselves to the overflowing of that river. (3.) She was become the mart of the nations; the great emporium of that part of the world. Some of every known nation might be found there, especially at some times of the year, when there was a general rendezvous of merchants. This is enlarged upon by another prophet, *Ezek. xxvii. 2, 3, &c.* See how the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God upon it, maketh rich. Tyre became rich and great by industry, though she had no other ploughs going but those that plough the waters. (4.) She was a joyous city, noted for mirth and jollity, *ver. 7.* Those that were so disposed, might find there all manner of sports and diversions, all the delights of the sons and daughters of men; balls, and plays, and operas, and every thing of that kind that a man had a fancy to. This made them secure and proud, and they despised the country people that neither knew nor relished any joys of that nature: and this made them very loth to believe and consider what warnings God gave them by his servants; they were too merry to mind them. Her antiquity likewise was of ancient days, and she was proud of that, and that helped to make her secure; as if because she had been a city time out of mind, and her antiquity had been of ancient days, therefore she must continue a city time without end, and her continuance must be to the days of eternity. (5.) She was a crowning city, *ver. 8.* that crowned herself. Such was the power and pomp of her magistrates that crowned those who had dependence on her and dealings with her. It is explained in the following words, *her merchants are princes* and live like princes, for the ease and state they take; and her traffickers, whatever country they go to, are the honourable of the earth, that are respected by all. How slightly soever some now speak of tradesmen, it seems formerly and amongst the wisest nations, there were merchants, and traders, and men of business, that were the honourable of the earth.

2. Her fall. It doth not appear that she brought trouble upon herself by provoking her neighbours with her wealth, but rather by tempting them with her wealth: but if that was it that induced Nebuchadnezzar to fall upon Tyre, he was disappointed; for after it had stood out a siege of thirteen years, and could hold out no longer, the inhabitants got away by sea with their families and goods, to other places where they had an interest, and left Nebuchadnezzar nothing but the bare city. See a history of Tyre in Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World, lib. ii. cap. 7. *lib. 3. pag. 253.* which will give much light to this prophecy, and that in Ezekiel concerning Tyre.

See how the destruction of Tyre is here foretold:

1. The haven should be spoiled, or at least neglected: there shall be no convenient harbour for the reception of the ships of Tarshish, but *all laid waste*, ver. 1. so that there shall be no house, no dock for the ships to ride in; no inns or public-houses for the seamen, no entering into the port; perhaps it was racked up with sand, or blocked up by the enemy: or Tyre being destroyed and laid waste, the ships that used to come from Tarshish and Chittim into that port, shall now no more enter in; for it is revealed or made known to them, they have received the dismal news that Tyre is destroyed and laid waste; so that there is now no more business for them there. See how it is in this world; those that are spoiled by their enemies, are commonly slighted by their old friends.

2. The inhabitants are struck with astonishment: Tyre was an island; the inhabitants of it that had made a mighty noise and bustle in the world, had revelled with loud huzzas, shall now be still and silent, ver. 2. they shall sit down as mourners; so overwhelmed with grief, that they shall not be able to express it. Their proud boasts of themselves, and defiance of their neighbours, shall be silenced. God can soon quiet those, and strike them dumb, that are the noisy, busy people of the world. Be still, for God will do his work, *Psal. xvi. 10. Zech. ii. 13.* and you cannot elude him.

3. The neighbours are amazed, blush, and are in pain for them: *Zidon is ashamed*, ver. 4. by whom Tyre was at first replenished, for the rolling waves of the sea brought to Zidon this news from Tyre; and there the strength of the sea, a high spring-tide, proclaimed, saying, *I travail not nor bring forth children now as I have done: I do not now bring ship-loads of young people to Tyre, to be bred up their in trade and business, as I used to do; which was the thing that made Tyre so rich and populous: or the sea that used to be loaded with fleets of ships about Tyre, shall now be as desolate as a sorrowful widow that is bereaved of all her children, and has none about her to nourish and bring up.* Egypt indeed was a much larger and more considerable kingdom than Tyre was; and yet Tyre had so large a correspondence upon the account of trade, that all the nations about shall be as much in pain upon the report of the ruin of that one city, as they would have been, and not long after were, upon the report of the ruin of all Egypt, ver. 5. Or, as some read it, *When as the report shall reach to the Egyptians, they shall be sorely pained to hear it of Tyre*; both because of the loss of their trade with that city, and because it was a threatening step towards their own ruin; when the neighbour's house was on fire, their own was in danger.

The merchants, as many as could, shall transmit their effects to other places and abandon Tyre, where they had raised their estates, and thought they had made them sure, ver. 6. Ye that have long been inhabitants of this isle (for it lay off in the sea about half a mile from the continent) it is time to howl now, for ye must pass over to Tarshish. The best course you can take is to make the best of your way to Tarshish, to the sea, to Tarshish, a city of Spain; so some; or to some other of your plantations. Those that think their mountain stands strong and cannot be moved; will find that here they have no continuing city: *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed.*

5. Those that could not make their escape, must expect no other but to be carried into captivity; for that was the way of conquerors in those times, to take those they conquered to be bondmen in their own country, and send off their own to be freemen in theirs, ver. 7. *Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn*; she shall be hurried away on foot into captivity, and many a weary step they shall take towards their own misery. Those that have lived in the greatest pomp and splendour, know not what hardships they may be reduced to before they die.

6. Many of those that attempted to escape should be pursued, and fall into the hands of the enemy: Tyre shall pass through her land as a river, ver. 10. running down, one company after another into the ocean or abyss of misery. Or, though they hasten away as a river, with the greatest witness, hoping to outrun the danger, yet there is no more strength, they are quite tired presently, and cannot get forward, but fall an easy prey into the hands of the enemy. And as Tyre has no more strength, so her sister Zidon has no more comfort, ver. 12. *Thou shalt no more rejoice, O oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon, that art now ready to be overpowered by the victorious Chaldeans: thy turn is next, therefore arise, pass over to Chittim; flee to Greece, to Italy, any where to shift for thine own safety; yet there also shalt thou have no rest: thine enemies shall disturb thee, and thine own fears shall distress thee, there where thou hopedst to find some repose.* Note, We deceive ourselves if we promise ourselves rest any where in this world: those that are uneasy in one place will be so in another; and when God's judgments pursue sinners, they will overtake them.

But when shall all their trouble come?

1. God will be the author of it: it is a *destruction from the Almighty*. It will be asked, ver. 8. *Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre? Who hath contrived it? Who hath resolved it? Who can find in his heart to lay such a stately, lovely city in ruins? And how is it possible it should be effected? To this it will be answered:*

(1.) God hath designed it, who is infinitely wise and just, and never did, nor ever will do any wrong to any of his creatures, ver. 9. *The Lord of hosts, that has all things at his dispose, and gives not account of any of his matters, he hath purposed it: it shall be done according to the counsel of his will: and that which he aims at herein is to strain the pride of all glory, to pollute it, profane it, and throw it to be trodden upon: and to bring into contempt and make despicable all the honourable ones of the earth, that they may not admire themselves and be admired by others as usual.* God did not bring those calamities upon Tyre in a way of sovereignty, to shew an arbitrary and irresistible power; but he did it to punish the Tyrians for their pride. Many other sins no doubt reigned among them; idolatry, sensuality, and oppression; but the sin of pride is fastened upon, as that which was the particular ground of God's controversy with Tyre, for he resists the proud. All the world observing and being surprised at the destruction of Tyre, we have here an exposition of it. God tells the world what he meant by it; 1. He designed to convince men of the vanity and uncertainty of all earthly glory; to shew them what a withering, fading, perishing thing it is, even when it seems most substantial: and it were well if men would be thoroughly taught this lesson, though it were at the expense of so great a destruction. Is men's learning and wealth their glory? Their pomp and power, their interest in and influence upon all about them? Are their stately houses, rich furniture, and splendid appearances, their glory? Look upon the ruins of Tyre, and see all this glory stained, and fulfilled, and buried in the dust. The honourable ones of heaven will be for ever so; but see the grandees of Tyre, some fled into banishment, others forced into captivity, and all impoverished; and you will conclude that the *honourable of the earth, even the most honourable, know not how soon they may be brought into contempt.* 2. He designed hereby to prevent their being proud of that glory, their being puffed up and confident of the continuance of it. Let the ruin of Tyre be a warning to all places and persons to take heed of pride, for it proclaims to all the world, that he that exalteth himself shall be abased.

2. God will do it, who has all power in his hand, and can do it

effectually; ver. 11. *He stretched out his hand over the sea, has done it many a time, witness the dividing of the Red-sea, and the drowning of Pharaoh in it: He hath shaken the kingdoms, that were most secure; and he hath now given commandment concerning this merchant city, to destroy the strongholds thereof: As its beauty shall not interfere for it, but that shall be stained: so its strength shall not protect it, but that shall be broken. If any think it strange that a city so well fortified, and that hath so many powerful allies, should be so totally ruined; let them know that it is the Lord of hosts that hath given a commandment to destroy the strongholds thereof; and who can gainsay his orders, or hinder the execution of them?*

2. The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of it, ver. 13. *Behold the land of the Chaldeans; how easily they and their land were destroyed by the Assyrians: Though their own hands founded it, set up the towers of Babylon, and raised up its palaces; yet he, i. e. the Assyrian, brought it to ruin; whence the Tyrians might infer, that as easily as the old Chaldeans were subdued by the Assyrians, so easily shall Tyre be vanquished by those new Chaldeans. Babel was built by the Assyrians, for them that dwell in the wilderness: It may be rendered, for the ships: The Assyrians founded it for ships and ship-men, that traffic upon those vast rivers Tigris and Euphrates to the Persian and Indian seas, for men of the desert; for Babylon is called the *desert of the sea*, chap. xxi. 1. Thus Tyrus was built upon the sea for the like purpose: But the Assyrians (saith Dr. Lightfoot) brought that to ruin now lately in Hezekiah's time; and so shall Tyre hereafter be brought to ruin by Nebuchadnezzar. Would we look more upon other's falling and weathering, we should not be so confident as we commonly are of the continuance of our own flourishing and standing.*

15. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot. 16. Take an harp; go about the city; thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered. 17. ¶ And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth. 18. And her merchandise, and her hire, shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up: for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

Here is; 1. The time fixed for the continuance of the desolations of Tyre, which were not to be perpetual desolations; *Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years*, ver. 15. So long it shall lie neglected and buried in obscurity: It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar much about the time that Jerusalem was, and lay as long as it did in its ruins. See the folly of that proud, ambitious conqueror: What the richer, what the stronger, was he for making himself master of Tyre, when all the inhabitants were driven out of it, and he had none of his own subjects to spare for replenishing and fortifying of it? It is strange what pleasure men could take in destroying cities, and making their memorial perish with them, *Psal. ix. 6.* He trampled on the pride of Tyre, and therein served God's purpose: But with greater pride, for which God soon after humbled him.

A prophecy of the restoration of Tyre to its glory again; *after the end of seventy years, according to the years of one king, or one dynasty or family of kings, viz. that of Nebuchadnezzar*; when that expired, the desolations of Tyre came to an end: And we may presume that Cyrus at the same time, when he released the Jews, and encouraged them to rebuild Jerusalem, released the Tyrians also, and encouraged them to rebuild Tyre: Thus the prosperity and adversity of places, as well as persons, are set the one over against the other: that the most glorious cities may not be secure, nor the most ruinous despair. It is foretold,

1. That God's providence shall again smile upon this ruined city, ver. 17. *The Lord will visit Tyre in mercy*; for though he contend, he will not contend for ever. It is not said, her old acquaintance shall visit her, the colonies she has planted, and the trading cities she has had correspondence with, they have forgotten her; but the Lord shall visit her by some unthought of turn: he shall cause his indignation towards her to cease, and then things will run of course in their former channel.

2. That she shall use her best endeavours to recover her trade again: She shall sing as an harlot, that has been some time under correction for her lewdness but when she is set at liberty (so violent is the bent of corruption) she will use her old arts of temptation. The Tyrians being returned from their captivity, and those that remained recovering new spirits thereupon, they shall contrive how to force a trade, shall procure the best choice of goods, undersell their neighbours, and be obliging to all customers; as an harlot that has been forgotten, when she comes to be spoken of again, recommends herself to company by singing and playing; takes a harp, goes about the city, perhaps in the night tenebrous, makes sweet melody, and sings many songs. These are innocent and allowable diversions, if soberly, and moderately, and modestly used; but those that value themselves upon their virtue, should not be over-fond of them, nor ambitious to excel in them; because whatever they are now, anciently they were some of the baits with which harlots used to entice fools. Tyre shall now by degrees come to be the mart of nations again; she shall return to her hire, to her traffic again, and shall commit fornication; i. e. shall have dealings in trade (for he carries on the similitude of a harlot) with all the kingdoms of the world, that she had formerly traded with in her prosperity. The love of worldly wealth is a spiritual whoredom, and therefore covetous people are called adulterers and adulteresses, *James iv. 4.* and covetousness is spiritual idolatry.

2. That having recovered her trade again, she shall make a better use of it than she had done formerly; and this good she should get by her calamities, ver. 18. *Her merchandise, and her hire, shall be holiness to the Lord*; The trade of Tyre, and all the gains of her trade, shall be devoted to God and to his honour, and employed to his service: It shall not be treasured and hoarded up, as formerly, to be the matter of their pride, and support of their carnal confidence: But it shall be laid out in acts of piety and charity. What they can spare from the maintenance of themselves and their families, shall be for them that dwell before the Lord; i. e. for the priests, the Lord's ministers that attend in his temple at Jerusalem; not to maintain them in pomp and grandeur; but that they and theirs may eat sufficiently, may have food convenient for them, with as little as may be of that care which would divert them from their ministration. And that they may not have rich and fine cloathing, but durable cloathing, that which is strong and lasting, Clothing for old men, so some read it; as if the priests,

priests, though they were young, must wear such plain, grave clothing as old men used to wear. Now, 1. This supposeth that religion should be set up in New Tyre, that they should come to the knowledge of the true God, and into communion with the Israel of God: Perhaps their being fellow-captives with the Jews in Babylon (who had prophets with them there) disposed them to join with them in their worship there, and turned them from idols, as it cured the Jews of their idolatry: And when they were released from them, and as they had reason to believe for their sakes, when they were settled again in Tyre, they would send gifts and offerings to the temple, and presents to the priests. We find men of Tyre then dwelling in the land of Judah, *Neh. xiii. 16.* Tyre and Sidon were better disposed to religion in Christ's time, than the cities of Israel, for if Christ had gone among them, *they would have repented, Matt. xi. 21.* And we meet with Christians at Tyre, *Acts xxi. 3.* and many years after did Christianity flourish there. Some of the rabbins refer this prophecy of the conversion of Tyre to the days of the Messiah. 2. It directs those that have estates, to make use of them in the service of God and religion, and to reckon that best laid up which is so laid out. Both the merchandise of the tradesman, and the hire of the day-labourers, shall be devoted to God. Both the merchandise, *i. e.* the employments we follow, and the hire, *i. e.* the gain of our employments, must be holiness to the Lord; alluding to the motto engraven on the frontlet of the high-priest, *Exod. xxxix. 30.* and to the separation of the tithe under the law, *Lev. xxvii. 30.* See a promise like this referring to gospel-times, *Zech. xiv. 20, 21.* We must first give up ourselves to be holiness to the Lord, before what we do, or have, or get, can be so. When we abide with God in our particular callings, and do common actions after a godly sort; when we abound in works of piety and charity, are liberal in relieving the poor, and supporting the ministry, and encouraging the gospel, then our merchandise and our hire is holiness to the Lord, if we sincerely look at his glory in it: And it need not be treasured and laid up on earth; for it is treasured and laid up in heaven, in *bags that wax not old, Luke xiii. 33.*

C H A P. XXIV.

*It is agreed that here begins a new sermon, which is continued to the end of chap. xxvii. And in it the prophet, according to the directions he had received, doth in many precious promises say to the righteous, It shall be well with them; and in many dreadful threatenings saith, Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them, chap. iii. 10, 11. And these are interwoven that they may illustrate each other. This chapter is mostly threatening; and as the judgments threatened are very sore and grievous ones, so the people threatened with those judgments, are very many: It is not the burden of any particular city or kingdom, as those before, but the burden of the whole earth. The word indeed signifies only the land, because our own land is commonly to us as all the earth: But here it is explained by another word that is not so confined, it is the world, *ver. 4.* so that it must at least take in a whole neighbourhood of nations. (1.) Some think (and very probably) that it is a prophecy of the great bawcock that Sennacherib and his Assyrian army should now shortly make of many of the nations in that part of the world. (2.) Others make it to point at the like devastations which about one hundred years after, Nebuchadnezzar and his armies should make in the same countries: going from one kingdom to another, not only to conquer them, but to ruin them, and lay them waste; for that was the method which those eastern nations took in their wars. And the promises that are mixed with the threatenings, are intended for the support and comfort of the people of God in those very calamitous times. And since here are no particular nations named, either by whom, or on whom, those desolations should be brought, I see not but it may refer to both those events. Nay, the scripture has many fulfillings, and we ought to give it its full latitude; and therefore I incline to think, that the prophet from those and the like instances which he had a particular eye to, designs here to represent in general the calamitous state of mankind, and the many miseries which human life is liable to, especially those that attend the wars of the nations. Surely the prophets were sent, not only to foretell particular events, but to form the minds of men to virtue and piety; and for that end their prophecies were written and preserved, even for our learning, and therefore ought not to be looked upon as of private interpretation: Now since a thorough conviction of the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy, will go far towards bringing us to God, and drawing out our affections towards another world; the prophet here shews what vexation of spirit we must expect to meet with in these things, that we may never take up our rest in them, nor promise ourselves satisfaction any where short of the enjoyment of God. In this chapter we have, 1. A threatening of desolating judgments for sin, *ver. 1—12.* To which is added an assurance, that in the midst of them good people should be comforted, *ver. 13—16.* 2. A further threatening of the like desolations, *ver. 16—22.* to which is added an assurance that in the midst of all God should be glorified.*

1. **B**EHOLD, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it up-side down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. 2. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. 3. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. 4. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. 5. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof: because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. 6. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. 7. The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh. 8. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. 9. They shall not

drink wine with a song, strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. 10. The city of confusion is broken down, every house is shut up, that no man may come in. 11. There is a crying for wine in the streets, all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. 12. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.

It is a very dark and melancholy scene that this prophecy presents to our view; turn our eyes which way we will, every thing looks dismal: These desolations are here described in a great variety of expressions to the same purpose, and all aggravating.

1. The earth is stripped of all its ornaments, and looks as if it were taken off its basis; it is made empty and waste, *ver. 1.* as if it were reduced to its first chaos, *Tolu* and *Bohu*, nothing but confusion and emptiness again, *Gen. i. 2. without form and void:* It is true, earth sometimes signifies the land, and so the same word *Eretz* is here translated, *ver. 3. the land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled;* but I see not why it should not there as well as *ver. 1.* be translated *the earth:* for most commonly, if not always, where it signifies some one particular land, it has something joined to it, or at least not far from it, which doth so appropriate it: As the land (or earth) of Egypt, or Canaan; or this land, or ours, or yours, or the like: It might indeed refer to some particular country, and an ambiguous word be used to warrant such an application; for it is good to apply to ourselves and our own lands, what the scripture saith in general, of the vanity and vexation of spirit that attends all things here below; but it should seem designed to what often happens to many countries, and will do while the world stands, and what may, we know not how soon, happen to our own; and what is the general character of all earthly things, they are empty of all solid comfort and satisfaction, a little thing makes them waste: We often see numerous families, and plentiful estates, utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled, by one judgment or another, or perhaps only by a gradual and insensible decay. Sin has turned the earth upside down, it is become quite another thing to man from what it was when God made it to be his habitation: It has also scattered abroad the inhabitants thereof; the rebellion of Babel was the occasion of the dispersion there. How many ways are there in which the inhabitants both of towns and of private houses are scattered abroad, so that near relations and old neighbours know nothing of one another: To the same purpose, *ver. 4. The earth mourneth and fadeth away,* it disappoints those that placed their happiness in it, and raised their expectations high upon it, and proves not what they promised themselves it would be; the whole world languisheth and fadeth away, as hastening towards a dissolution: It is at the best like a flower which withers in the hand of those that please themselves too much with it, and lay it in their bottoms. And as the earth itself grows old, so they that dwell in it are desolate; men carry crazy, sickly bodies along with them, are often solitary, and confined by affliction, *ver. 6.* When the earth languisheth, and that is not so fruitful as it used to be, then they that dwell therein, that make it their home and rest, and portion, are desolate; whereas they that by faith dwell in God can rejoice in him, even when the fig-tree doth not blossom. If we look abroad and see in how many places pestilences and burning fevers rage, and what multitudes are swept away by them in a little time, so that sometimes the living scarce suffice to bury the dead; perhaps we shall understand what the prophet means, when he saith *the inhabitants of the earth are burned,* or consumed some by one disease, others by another, and there are but few men left in comparison. Note, the world we live in is a world of disappointment, a vale of tears, and a dying world: as the children of men in it are but of few days and full of trouble.

2. It is God that brings all these calamities upon the earth; the Lord that made the earth and made it fruitful and beautiful for the service and comfort of man, now maketh it empty, and maketh it waste, *ver. 1.* for its Creator is and will be its judge; he has an incontestible right to pass sentence upon it, and an irresistible power to execute that sentence: it is the Lord that has spoken this word, and he will do the work, *ver. 3.* it is his curse that hath devoured the earth, *ver. 6.* the general curse which sin brought upon the ground for man's sake, *Gen. iii. 10.* and all the particular curses which families and countries bring upon themselves by their enormous wickedness. See the power of God's curse, how it makes all empty, and lays all waste; those whom he curseth they are cursed indeed.

3. Persons of all ranks and conditions shall share in these calamities, *ver. 2. it shall be as with the people, so with the priest, &c.* This is true of many of the common calamities of human life; all are subject to the same diseases of body, sorrows of mind, afflictions in relations, and the like; there is one event to those of very different stations, time and chance happens to them all: it is in a special manner true of the destroying judgments which God sometimes brings upon sinful nations; when he pleaseth he can make them universal, so that none shall escape them, or be exempt from them; whether men have little or much they shall lose it all. Those of the meaner rank smart first by famine, but those of the higher rank go first into captivity, while the poor of the land are left. It shall be all alike, (1.) With high and low; *as with the people, so with the priest, or prince:* the dignity of magistrates and ministers, and the respect and reverence owing to both, shall not secure them; *the faces of elders are not honoured, Lam. v. 12.* The priests had been as corrupt and wicked as the people, and if their character serve not to restrain them from sin, how can they expect it should serve to secure them from judgments? in both it is like people, like priest, *Hosea iv. 8, 9.* (2.) With bond and free; *as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with the mistress;* they have all corrupted their way, and therefore will all be made miserable when the earth is made waste. (3.) With rich and poor; those that have money beforehand, that are purchasing, and lending out money to interest, will far eno better than those that are so impoverished that they are forced to sell their estates, and take up money at interest. There are judgments short of the great day of judgment, in which poor and rich meet together. Let not those that are advanced in the world set their inferiors at too great a distance, because they know not how soon they may be set upon a level with them: the rich man's wealth is his strong city in his own conceit; but it doth not always prove so.

4. It is sin that brings these calamities upon the earth; therefore the earth is made empty, and fadeth away, because it is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, *ver. 5.* it is polluted by the sins of men, and therefore it is made desolate by the judgments of God: such is the filthy nature of sin, that it defiles the earth itself under the sinful inhabitants thereof, and it is rendered unpleasant in the eyes of God and good men. See *Lev. xviii. 25—27, 21.* Blood in particular defiles the land, *Numb. xxxv. 33.* The earth never spues out its inhabitants, till they have first defiled it by their sins. Why, what have they done? (1.) They have transgressed the laws of their creation, not answered the ends of it; the bonds of the law of nature have been broken by them, and they have cast from them the cords of their obligations to the God of nature. (2.) They have changed the ordinances of revealed religion, those of them that have had the benefit of that; they have

have neglected the ordinances, so some read it; and have made no conscience of observing them: they have passed over the laws in the commission of sin, and have passed by the ordinance in the omission of duty. (3.) Herein they have broken the everlasting covenant, which is a perpetual bond, and will be to those that keep it a perpetual blessing: it is God's wonderful condescension that he is pleased to deal with men in a covenant way; to do them good, and thereby oblige them to do him service: even those that had no benefit by God's covenant with Abraham, had benefit by his covenant with Noah and his sons, which is called an everlasting covenant, his covenant with day and night; but they observe not the precepts of the sons of Noah, they acknowledge not God's goodness in the day and night, nor study to make him any grateful returns, and so break the everlasting covenant, and defeat the gracious designs and intentions of it.

5. These judgments shall humble men's pride and marr their mirth: when the earth is made empty.

1. It is great mortification to men's pride, *ver. 4.* *The haughty people of the earth do languish*; for they have lost that which supported their pride, and for which they magnified themselves: those that have held their heads the highest, God can make them hang the head.

2. It is a great damp to men's jollity: this is enlarged upon much, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* *All the merry hearted do sigh*; such is the nature of carnal mirth, it is but as the crackling of thorns under a pot, *Eccles. vii. 6.* Great laughers commonly end in a sigh: they that make the world their chief joy, cannot rejoice evermore. When God sends his judgments into the earth, he designs thereby to make those serious that were wholly addicted to their pleasures: *Let your laughter be turned into mourning.* When the earth is emptied, the noise of them that rejoice endeth: Carnal joy is a noisy thing; but the noise of it will soon be at an end, and the end of it is heaviness.

Two things are made use of to excite and express vain mirth, and the jovial crew is here deprived of both: (1.) Drinking; the new wine mourneth, it is grown sour for want of drinking; for how proper soever it may be for the heavy heart, *Prov. xxxi. 6.* it doth not relish then as it doth to the merry-hearted: the vine languisheth, and gives little hopes of a vintage, and therefore the merry-hearted do sigh; for they know no other gladness but that of their corn, and wine, and oil increasing, *Psal. iv. 8.* and if you desire their vines and their fig-trees, you make all their mirth to cease, *Hosea ii. 11, 12.* They shall not now drink wine with a song, as they used to do, and with huzzas; but rather drink it with a sigh: nay, *Strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it*; because they cannot but mingle their tears with it; or through sickness they have lost the relish of it. God has many ways to embitter wine and strong drink to those that love them, and have the highest gust of them: distemper of body; anguish of mind, the ruin of the estate or country, will make the strong drink bitter, and all the delights of sense tasteless and insipid. (2.) Music; *The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, and the joy of the harp, which used to be at their feasts*, *Isa. v. 12.* The captives in Babylon hang their harps on the willow-trees. In short, all joy is darkened, there is not a pleasant look to be seen, nor has any one power to force a smile; all the mirth of the land is gone, *ver. 11.* and if it were that mirth which Solomon calls madness, there is no great loss of it.

6. The cities will in a particular manner feel from these desolations of the country, *ver. 10.* *The city of confusion is broken, is broken down*, so we read it; it lies exposed to invading powers, not only by the breaking down of its walls, but the confusion that the inhabitants are in; every house is shut up; perhaps by reason of the plague, which has burned or consumed the inhabitants, so that there are but few men left, *ver. 6.* Houses infected used to be shut up that no man may come in; or, they are shut up because they are deserted and uninhabited. There is a crying for wine, *i. e.* for the spoiling of the vintage, so that there is likely to be no wine. In the city, in Jerusalem itself that had been so much frequented, there shall be left nothing but desolation; grass shall grow in the streets, and the gate is smitten with destruction, *ver. 12.* all that used to pass and repass through the gate are smitten, and all the strength of the city is cut off. How soon can God make a city of order a city of confusion, and then it will soon be a city of desolation!

13. ¶ When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, *there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done.* 14. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from the sea. 15. Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires, even the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea.

Here is mercy remembered in the midst of wrath; in Judah and Jerusalem, and the neighbouring countries, when they are over-run by the enemy, Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar, there shall be a remnant preserved in the general ruin, and it shall be a devout and pious remnant. And this method God usually observes when his judgments are abroad; he doth not make a full end; *Isa. vi. 13.* Or, we may take it thus: though the greatest part of mankind have all their comfort ruined by the emptying of the earth, and the making of that desolate; yet there are some few that understand themselves better, who have laid up their treasures in heaven, and not in things below, and therefore can keep up their comfort and joy in God, even then when the earth mourneth and fadeth away.

Observe, 1. The small number of this remnant, *ver. 13.* when all goes to ruin there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and the gleaning grapes; here and there one that shall escape the common calamity, as Noah and his family when the old world was drowned; that shall be able to sit down upon a heap of ruins of all their creature-comforts, and even then rejoice in the Lord, *Hab. iii. 16, 17.* who, when all faces gathered blackness, can lift up their heads with joy, *Luke xxi. 26-28.* These few are dispersed, and at a distance from each other, like the gleanings of the olive-tree, and they are concealed, hid under the leaves. The Lord only knows them that are his, the world doth not.

2. The great devotion of this remnant, which is the greater for their having so narrowly escaped this great destruction, *ver. 14.* *They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing.* (1.) They shall sing for joy in their deliverance: when the mirth of carnal worldlings ceaseth, the joy of the saints is as lively as ever: when the merry-hearted do sigh because the vine languisheth, the up-right hearted do sing, because the covenant of grace, the fountain of their comforts and the foundation of their hopes, never fails: they that rejoice in the Lord can rejoice in tribulation, and by faith may be in triumph when all about them are in tears. (2.) They shall sing to the praise and glory of God; shall sing not only for the mercy, but for the majesty of the Lord; their songs are awful and serious, and in their spiritual joys they have a reverent regard to the greatness of God, and keep

at an humble distance when they attend him with their praises. The majesty of the Lord, which is matter of terror to wicked people, furnisheth the saints with songs of praise: They shall sing for the magnificence or transcendent excellency of the Lord, shewed both in his judgments and in his mercies; for we must sing, and sing unto him of both, *Psal. ci. 1.* Those that have made or are making their escape from the land, that being emptied and made desolate by the sea, and the isles of the sea, shall from thence cry aloud; their dispersion shall help to spread the knowledge of God, and they shall make even remote shores to ring with his praises. It is much for the honour of God, if those that fear him rejoice in him and praise him, even in the most melancholy times.

3. Their holy zeal to excite others to the same devotion, *ver. 15.* they encourage their fellow-sufferers to do likewise. (1.) Those that are in the fires, in the furnace of affliction, those fires by which the inhabitants of the earth are burned, *ver. 6.* Or in the vallies, the low, dark, dirty places. (2.) Those that are in the isles of the sea, whither they are banished, or are forced to flee for shelter, and hide themselves remote from all their friends, they went through fire and water, *Psal. lxi. 12.* yet in both let them glorify the Lord, and glorify him as the Lord God of Israel. They that through grace can glory in tribulation ought to glorify God in tribulation; and give him thanks for their comforts, which abound as their afflictions do abound. We must in every fire, even in the hottest, in every isle, even the remotest, keep up our good thoughts of God; when though he lay us yet we must trust in him, though for his sake we are killed all the day long, yet none of these things move us; then we glorify the Lord in the fires: thus the three children, and the martyrs that sung at the stake.

16. ¶ From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous: but I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously. 17. Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. 18. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear, shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit, shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. 19. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. 20. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. 21. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. 22. And they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. 23. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

These verses, as those before, plainly speak,

1. Comfort to saints; they may be driven by the common calamities of the places where they live into the uttermost parts of the earth, or perhaps they are forced thither for their religion; but there they are singing, not sighing, from thence have we heard songs, and it is a comfort to us to hear them, to hear that good people carry their religion along with them, even to the most distant regions, to hear that God visits them there; and gives encouragement to hope that from thence he will gather them, *Duet. xxx. 4.* And this is their song, even glory to the righteous; it is singular, to the righteous God, who is just in all he has brought upon us; this is glorifying the Lord in the fires: or, these songs redound to the glory or beauty of the righteous who sing them. We do the greatest honour imaginable to ourselves, when we employ ourselves in honouring and glorifying God. This may have reference to the sending of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, as far off as this island of ours; in the days of the Messiah, the glad tidings of which are echoed back in songs heard from thence, from churches planted there, even glory to the righteous God, agreeing with the angel's song, *Glory be to God in the highest*, and glory to all righteous men; for the work of redemption was ordained before the world for our glory.

2. Terror to sinners; the prophet having comforted himself and others with the prospect of a saved remnant, returns to lament the miseries he saw breaking in like a mighty torrent upon the earth; *but I said, my leanness, my leanness, woe unto me*, *ver. 16.* the very thought of it frets me, and makes me lean. He foresees,

1. The prevalency of sin; that iniquity should abound, *ver. 16.* *The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously*; this is itself a judgment, and that which provokes God to bring other judgments. (1.) Men are false to one another, there is no faith in man; but an universal dishonesty: Truth, that sacred bond of society is departed, and there is nothing but treachery in men's dealings. See *Jer. ix. 1, 2.* (2.) They are all false to their God; as to him and their covenant with him, the children of men are all treacherous dealers, and have dealt very treacherously with their God; in departing from their allegiance to him: this is the original, and this is the aggravation of the sin of the world; and when men have been false to their God, how should they be true to any other?

2. The prevalency of wrath and judgment for that sin:

1. The inhabitants of the earth will be pursued from time to time, from place to place, by one mischief or other, *ver. 17, 18.* *Fear, and the pit, and the snare*, fear of the pit, and the snare are upon them, wherever they are; for the sons of men know not what evil time they may suddenly be shared in, *Eccles. ix. 12.* These three words seem to be chosen for the sake of an elegant paronomasia, or, as we now scornfully call it, a jingle of words; *Pachad, and Pachath, and Pack*; but the meaning is plain, *ver. 18.* that evil pursueth sinners, *Prov. xiii. 21.* that the curse shall overtake the disobedient, *Duet. xxviii. 15.* that those who are secure because they have escaped one judgment, know not how soon another may arrest them; what this prophet threatens all the inhabitants of the earth with, another makes part of the judgments of Moab, *Jer. xlviii. 43, 44.* But it is a common instance of the calamitous state of human life, that when we seek to avoid one mischief we fall into a worse, and that the end of one trouble is often the beginning of another; so that we are least safe when we are most secure.

2. The

2. The earth itself will be shaken to pieces, it will be literally so at last, when all the works therein shall be burnt up, and often betwixt now and then figuratively so: the windows from on high are open to pour down wrath, as in the universal deluge, upon the wicked (God shall reign forever, Psal. xi. 6. and the fountains of the great deep being broken up, the foundations of the earth do shake of course, the frame of nature is unshaken, and all is in confusion. See how elegantly this is expressed, ver. 19, 20. *The earth is utterly broken down, it is clean dissolved, it is moved exceedingly, moved out of its place; God shakes heaven and earth, Hag. ii. 6.* See the misery of those who lay up their treasure in the things of the earth, and mind those things, they place their confidence in that which shall shortly be utterly broken down and dissolved; *the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, so unsteady, so uncertain, are all the motions of these things, worldly men dwell in it as in a palace, as in a castle, as in an impregnable tower; but it shall be removed like a cottage, so easily, so suddenly, and with so little loss to the great Landlord: the pulling down of the earth will be but like the pulling down of a cottage, which the country is willing to be rid of because it doth not harbour beggars; and therefore no care is taken to rebuild it, it shall fall and not rise again; but there shall be new heavens and a new earth, in which shall dwell nothing but righteousness.*

But what is it that shakes the earth thus, and sinks it? It is the transgression thereof that shall be heavy upon it. Note, Sin is a burden to the whole creation, it is a heavy burden, a burden under which it groans now, and will sink at last: Sin is the ruin of states, and kingdoms, and families; they fall under the weight of that *talent of lead*, Zech. v. 7, 8.

3. God will have a particular controversy with the kings and great men of the earth, ver. 21. *He will punish the hosts of the high ones; hosts of princes are no more before God than hosts of common men: what can an host of high ones do with their combined force, when the Most High, the Lord of hosts, contends with them to abase their height, and scatter their hosts, and break all their confederacies. The high ones that are on high, that are puffed up with their height and grandeur, that think themselves so high that they are out of the reach of any danger, God will visit upon them all their pride and cruelty, with which they have oppressed and injured their neighbours and subjects, and it shall now return upon their own heads. The kings of the earth shall now be reckoned with upon the earth, to shew that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth, and will render to the proudest of kings according to the fruit of their doings. Let those that are trampled upon by the high ones of the earth comfort themselves with this, that though they cannot, dare not, must not resist them, yet there is a God that will call them to an account, that will triumph over them upon their own dunghill; and the earth they are kings of in the eye of God is no better. This is general only; it is particularly foretold, ver. 22. that they shall be gathered together as prisoners; convicted, condemned prisoners are gathered in the pit, or dungeon; and there they shall be shut up under close confinement, the kings and high ones that took all possible liberty themselves, and took a pride and pleasure in shutting up others, shall now be themselves shut up. Let not the freeman glory in his freedom, no more than the strong man in his strength, for he knows not what restraints he is reserved for; but after many days they shall be visited. Either, (1.) They shall be visited in wrath; it is the same word in another form that is used, ver. 21. the Lord shall punish them: they shall be reserved to the day of execution, as condemned prisoners, and as fallen angels are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day, Jude 6. Let this account for the delays of divine vengeance; sentence is not executed speedily, because execution is not yet come, and perhaps will not come till after many days; but it is certain, that the wicked is reserved for the day of destruction, and is therefore preserved in the mean time, but shall be brought forth to the day of wrath, Job xxi. 30. Let us therefore judge nothing before the time. (2.) They shall be visited in mercy, and be discharged from their imprisonment, and shall obtain, if not their dignity, yet their liberty again; Nebuchadnezzar in his conquests made many kings and princes his captives, and kept them in the dungeon in Babylon, and among the rest Jehoiachin king of Judah; but after many days, when his head was laid, his son visited them, and granted (as should seem) some reviving to them all in their bondage: for it is made an instance of his particular kindness to Jehoiachin that he set his throne above the throne of the rest of the kings that were with him, Jer. lii. 32. If we apply it to the general state of mankind, it speaks a revolution of conditions; those that were high are punished, those that were punished are relieved after many days; that none in this world may be secure, though their condition be never so prosperous, nor any despair, though their condition be never so deplorable.*

3. Glory to God in all this, ver. 23. When all this comes to pass, when the proud enemies of God's church are humbled and brought down, (1.) Then it shall appear beyond contradiction that the Lord reigns; which is always true, but not always alike evident: when the kings of the earth are punished for their tyranny and oppression, then it is proclaimed and proved to all the world, that God is King of kings, King above them, by whom they are conquerable. King over them, to whom they are unaccountable; that he reigns as Lord of hosts, of all hosts, of their hosts; that he reigns in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem: in his church, for the honour and welfare of that, pursuant to the promises on which that is founded, reigns in his word and ordinances; that he reigns before his ancients, before all his saints, especially before his ministers, the elders of his church, who have their eye upon all the out-goings of his power and providence, and in all these events observe his hand. God's ancients, the old disciples, the experienced Christians, that have often when they have been perplexed gone into the sanctuary of God in Zion and Jerusalem, and acquainted themselves with his manifestations of himself there, they shall see more than others of God's dominion and sovereignty in these operations of his providence. (2.) Then it shall appear beyond comparison that he reigns gloriously in such brightness and lustre that *the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed*, as the lesser lights are eclipsed and extinguished by the greater. Great men that thought themselves to have as bright a lustre; and as vast a dominion as the sun and moon, shall be ashamed when God appears above them, much more when he appears against them: then shall *their faces be filled with shame* that they may seek God's name. The eastern nations worshipped the sun and moon; but when God shall appear so gloriously for his people against him and their enemies, all these pretended deities shall be ashamed that ever they received the homage of their deluded worshippers: The glory of the Creator infinitely out-shines the glory of the brightest creatures. In the great day, when the Judge of heaven and earth shall shine forth in his glory, *the sun shall by his transcendent lustre be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.*

C H A P. XXV.

After the threatenings of wrath in the foregoing chapter, we have here, (1.) Thankful praises for what God hath done, which the prophet, in the name of the church, offers up to God, and teacheth us Vol. II. No. CXI.*

to offer the like, ver. 1—5. (2.) Precious promises of what God would yet further do for his church, especially in the grace of the gospel, ver. 6, 7, 8. (3.) The church's triumph in God over her enemies thereupon, ver. 9—12. This chapter looks as pleasantly upon the church as the former looked dreadfully upon the world.

1. **O** LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. 2. For thou hast made of a city, an heap; of a defenced city, a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. 3. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. 4. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. 5. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

It was said in the close of the foregoing chapter that the *Lord of hosts shall reign gloriously*; now, in compliance with that, the prophet here speaks of the glorious majesty of his kingdom, Psal. cxlv. 12. and gives him the glory of it; and however it might have an accomplishment in the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity there, it seems to look farther to the praises that should be offered up to God by the gospel-church, for Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, and the comforts he has provided for all believers. Here.

1. The prophet determines to praise God himself: for they that would stir up others, should in the first place stir up themselves to praise God, ver. 1. *O Lord, thou art my God, a God in covenant with me; when God is punishing the kings of the earth upon the earth, and making them tremble before him, a poor prophet can go to him, and with an humble boldness say, O Lord thou art my God, and therefore I will exalt thee. I will praise thy name.* Those that have the Lord for their God are obliged to praise him: for therefore he took us to be a people, *that we might be unto him for a name, and for a praise*, Jer. xiii. 11. In praising God we exalt him, not that we can make him higher than he is; but we must make him to appear to ourselves and others higher than we both. See *Ezek. xv. 2.*

2. He pleaseth himself with the thought that others also shall be brought to praise God, ver. 3. Therefore because of the *distress that hath made the earth by thy providence*, Psal. xlv. 8. and the just vengeance thou hast taken on thine and thy church's enemies, therefore shall the strong people glorify thee in concert, and the city, that is, the metropolis of the terrible nations, or the cities of such nations, shall fear thee. This may be understood (1.) Of those people that have been strong and terrible against God; those that have been enemies to God's kingdom, and have sought against the interests of it with a great deal of strength and terror, shall either be converted, and glorify God by joining with his people in his service, or at least convinced so as to own themselves conquered: Those that had been the terror of the mighty, shall be forced to tremble before the judgments of God, and call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them. Or, (2.) Of those that shall be now made strong and terrible for God and by him, though before they were weak and trampled upon: They that fear God and glorify him, he shall so visibly appear for them and with them, that all shall acknowledge them a strong people, and shall stand in awe of them: There was a time when *many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them*, Esther viii. 17. and when they that knew their God were strong and did exploits, Dan. xi. 32. for which they glorify God.

3. He observes what is and ought to be the matter of this praise. we and others must exalt God and praise him, for,

1. He has done wonders, according to the counsel of his own will, ver. 1. we exalt God by admitting what he has done as truly wonderful; wonderful proofs of his power, beyond what any creature could perform; and wonderful proofs of his goodness, beyond what such sinful creatures as we are could expect. These wonderful things, which are new and surprising to us and altogether unthought of, are according to his counsels of old, devised by his wisdom, and designed for his own glory and the comfort of his people. All the operations of providence, are according to God's eternal counsels, and those faithfulness and truth itself; all consonant to his attributes, consistent with one another, and sure to be accomplished in their season.

2. He has in particular humbled the pride, and broken the power of the mighty ones of the earth, ver. 2. *Thou hast made of a city, of many a city, a heap of rubbish; of many a defenced city, that thought itself well guarded by nature and art, and the multitude and courage of its militia, thou hast made a ruin; for what created strength can hold out against Omnipotence?* Many a city that has been so richly built that it might be called a palace, and so much frequented and visited by persons of the best rank from all parts, that it might be called a palace of strangers; yet thou hast made it to be no city, it is levelled with the ground, and not one stone left upon another, and it shall never be built again. This has been the case of many cities in divers parts of the world, and in our own nation particularly; cities that flourished once, are gone to decay and lost, and it is scarce known (except by urns or coins digged up out of the earth) where they stood. How many of the cities of Israel have long since been heaps and ruins? God hereby teacheth us, that *here we have no continuing city*, and must therefore seek one to come, which will never be a ruin or go to decay.

3. He hath seasonably relieved and succoured his needy and distressed people, ver. 4. *Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy.* As God weakens the strong that are proud and secure, so he strengthens the weak that are humble and serious, and stay themselves upon him: Nay, he not only makes them strong, but he is himself their strength: for in him they strengthen themselves, and it is his favour and grace that is the strength of their hearts: He is a strength to the needy in his distress, then when he needs strength, and when his distress drives him to God: And as he strengthens them against their inward decays, so he shelters them from outward assaults: He is a refuge from the storm of rain or hail, and a shadow from the scorching heat of the sun in summer. God is sufficient protection to his people in all weathers, both hot and cold, wet and dry: the armour of righteousness serves both on the right hand and on the left, 2 Cor. vi. 7. Whatever dangers or troubles God's people may be in, effectual care is taken that they shall sustain no real hurt or damage: When perils are most frightening and most threatening, God will then appear for the safety of his people; When

the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall, which makes a great noise, but cannot overthrow the wall. The enemies of God's poor are terrible ones, they do all they can to make themselves so to them; their rage is like a blast of wind, loud and blustering and furious; but is as the wind is under a divine check; for God holds the winds in his fists: and God will be such a shelter to his people as that they shall be able to stand the shock, keep their ground, and maintain their integrity and peace. A storm beating on a ship tosseth it, but that which beats on a wall never firs it. Psal. lxxvi. 10.—xxxviii. 7.

4. That he doth and will shelter those that trust in him from the influence of their proud oppressors, *ver. 5. Thou shalt, or thou dost, bring down the noise of strangers, thou shalt abate and still it, as the heat in a dry place is abated and moderated by the shadow of a cloud interposing; the branch, or rather the song or triumph of the terrible ones shall be brought low, and they shall be made to change their note and fall their voice. Observe here, (1.) The oppressors of God's people are called strangers; for they forget that those they oppress are made of the same mould, of the same blood with them: They are called terrible ones; for so they affect to be, rather than amiable ones; they would rather be feared than loved. (2.) Their insolence towards the people of God is noisy and hot, and that is all; it is but the noise of strangers, who think to carry their point by hectoring and bullying all that stand in their way, and talking big; Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, Jer. xlvi. 17. It is like the heat of the sun scorching in the middle of the day, but where is it when the sun is set! (3.) Their noise and heat, and all their triumph will be humbled and brought low, when their hopes are baffled, and all their honours laid in the dust: The branches, even the top-branches of the terrible ones, will be broken off and thrown to the dunghill. (4.) If the labourers in God's vineyard be at any time called to bear the burden and heat of the day, he will find some way or other to refresh them as with the shadow of a cloud, that they may not be pressed above measure.*

6. And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. 8. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

If we suppose (as many do) that this refers to the great joy that should be in Zion and Jerusalem, either when the army of the Assyrians was routed by an angel, or when the Jews were released out of their captivity in Babylon, or upon occasion of some other the like surprising deliverance; yet we cannot avoid making it to look further to the grace of the gospel, and the glory which is the crown and consummation of that grace; for it is at our resurrection through Christ that *shall be brought to pass the saying that is here written*, then, and not till then, (if we may believe St. Paul,) it shall have its full accomplishment, *Death is swallowed up in victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 54. That is a key to the rest of the promises here that are in the same chain. And so we have here a prophecy of that salvation, and that grace, which was brought unto us by Jesus Christ, into which the prophets enquired, and searched diligently, 1 Pet. 10.

1. That the grace of the gospel should be a royal feast for all people; not like that of Ahabuerus, which was intended only to shew the grandeur of the master of the feast, *Ezher i. 4.* for this is intended to gratify the guests; and therefore whereas all there was for shew, all here is for substance. The preparations made in the gospel for the kind reception of penitents and supplicants with God, are often in the New Testament set forth by the similitude of a feast, as *Matt. xxii. 1.* which seems to be borrowed from this here. (1.) God himself is the master of the feast, and we may be sure he prepares like himself, as becomes him to give, rather than as becomes us to receive: The Lord of hosts makes this feast. (2.) The guests invited are all people, Gentiles as well as Jews; *Go preach the gospel to every creature.* There is enough for all, and whoever will may come and take freely, even those that are gathered out of the highways and the hedges. (3.) The place is mount Zion, then the preaching of the gospel takes rise, the preacher must begin at Jerusalem. The gospel-church is the Jerusalem that is above, there this feast is made, and to it all the invited guests must go. (4.) The provision is very rich, and every thing of the best; it is a feast which supposeth abundance and variety; it is a continual feast to believers, it is their own fault if it be not: It is a feast of fat things and full of marrow; so relishing, so nourishing, are the comforts of the gospel to all those that feast upon them and digest them. The returning prodigal was entertained with the fatted calf; and David has that pleasure in communion with God, with which his soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. It is a feast of wines on the lees; the strongest bodied wines that have been kept long upon the lees, and then are well refined from them, so that they are clear and fine. There is that in the gospel which, like wine soberly used, makes glad the heart and raiseth the spirits, and is fit for those that are of a heavy heart, being under convictions of sin, and mourning for it, that they may drink and forget their misery, (for that is the proper use of wine, it is a cordial for those that need it, *Prov. xxxi. 6, 7.*) may be of good cheer, knowing that their sins are forgiven; and may be vigorous in their spiritual work and warfare, as a strong man refreshed with wine.

2. That the world should be freed from that darkness of ignorance and mistake, in the mists of which it had been so long lost and buried, *ver. 7. He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering; i. e. the covering of the face, with which all people are covered; i. e. hood-winked or blind-folded; so that they cannot see their way, nor go about their work; and by reason of which they wander endlessly: Their faces are covered as men condemned, or as dead men; there is a vail spread over all nations, for they all sit in darkness; and no marvel, when the Jews themselves, among whom God was known, had a vail upon their hearts, 2 Cor. iii. 14. But this vail the Lord will destroy, by the light of his gospel shining in the world, and the power of his Spirit opening men's eyes to receive it. He will raise those to spiritual life, that had long been dead in the trespasses and sins.*

3. That death should be conquered, the power of it broken, and the property of it altered; *he will swallow up death in victory*, *ver. 8.* (1.) Christ will himself, in his resurrection, triumph over death; will break its bars asunder, and cast away all its cords. The grave seemed to swallow him up, but really he swallowed it up. (2.) The happiness of the saints shall be out of the reach of death, which puts a period to all the enjoyments of this world, embitters them, and stains the beauty of them. (3.) Believers may triumph over death, and look upon it as a conquered enemy, *O death where is thy sting?* (1.) When the dead bodies of the saints shall be raised

at the great day, and their mortality swallowed up of life, then death will be for ever swallowed up of victory: And it is the last enemy.

4. That grief shall be banished, and there shall be perfect and endless joy: *The Lord God will wipe away all tears from all faces.* Those that mourn for sin shall be comforted, and have their consciences pacified: In the covenant of grace there shall be that provided which is sufficient to balance all the sorrows of this present time, to wipe away our tears, and to refresh us. Those particularly who shall suffer for Christ, shall have consolations abounding as their afflictions do abound: But in the joys of heaven, and no where short of them, will fully be brought to pass this saying, as that before, for there it is that God shall wipe away all tears, *Rev. vii. 17—xxi. 4.* And therefore there shall be no more sorrow, because there shall be no more death. The hope of this should now wipe away all excessive tears, all the weeping that hinders sowing.

5. That all the reproach upon religion, and the serious professors of it, shall be for ever rolled away: *The rebuke of his people, which they have long laid under, the calumnies and misrepresentations by which they have been blackened, the insolence and cruelty with which their persecutors have trampled on them and trodden them down, shall be taken away:* Their righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, in the view of all the world, who shall be convinced they are not such as they have been invidiously characterised: And so their salvation from the injuries done them as such, shall be wrought out. Sometimes in this world God doth that for his people, which takes away their reproach among men: However, it will be done effectually at the great day; for the Lord hath spoken it, who can and will make it good. Let us patiently bear sorrow and shame now, and improve both, for shortly both will be done away.

9. ¶ And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. 10. For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill. 11. And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim: and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands. 12. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust.

Here is, 1. The welcome which the church shall give to these blessings promised in the foregoing verses, *ver. 9. It shall be said in that day, with a humble holy triumph and exultation. Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him.* Thus will the deliverance of the church out of long and sore troubles be celebrated; thus will it be life from the dead. With such transports of joy and praise will those entertain the glad tidings of the Redeemer, who looked for him, and for redemption in Jerusalem by him; And with such a triumphant song as this, will glorified saints enter into the joy of the Lord. (1.) God himself must have the glory of all; *Lo, this is our God, this is their Lord.* This which is done is his doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes: Herein he has done like himself, has magnified his own wisdom, power, and goodness: Herein he has done for us like our God, a God in covenant with us, and whom we serve. Note, Our triumphs must not terminate in what God doth for us, and gives to us; but must pass through them to himself, who is the author and giver of them: *this is our God.* Have any of the nations of the earth such a God to trust to? No, *their rock is not as our rock: there is none like unto the God of Jerusalem.* (2.) The longer it has been expected, the more welcome it is. This is he whom we have waited for in dependence upon his word of promise and a full assurance that he would come in the set-time, in due time, and therefore were willing to tarry his time. And now we find it is not in vain to wait for him; for the mercy comes at last with an abundant recompence for the delay. (3.) It is matter of joy unpeakable: *we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.* We that share in the benefits of it, will concur in the joyful thanksgiving for it. (4.) It is an encouragement to hope for the continuance and perfection of this salvation; *we have waited for him, and he will save us, will carry on what he has begun;* but as for God, our God, his work is perfect.

2. A prospect of further blessings for the securing and perpetuating of these.

1. The power of God shall be engaged for them, and shall continue to take their part: *in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest*, *ver. 10.* The church and people of God shall have continued proofs of God's presence with them and residence among them: his hand shall be continually over them to protect and guard them, and continually stretched out to them for their supply. Mount Zion is his rest for ever; here he will dwell.

2. The power of their enemies that is engaged against them, shall be broken. Moab is here put for all the adversaries of God's people that are vexatious to them, they shall all be trodden down or threshed (as when they beat out the corn by treading it) and shall be thrown out as straw to the dunghill, being good for nothing but to make muck of. God having caused his hand to rest upon his mountain; it shall not be a hand that hangs down, or is folded up, feeble and unactive: but he shall spread forth his hands, in the midst of his people, like one that swims; which intimates that he will employ and exert his power for them vigorously, that he will be doing for them on all sides: that he will easily and effectually put by the opposition that is given to his gracious intentions for them, and thereby further and push forward his good work among them; and he will be continually active on their behalf, for so the swimmer is. It is foretold particularly what he shall do for them; (1.) He shall bring down the pride of their enemies (which Moab was notoriously guilty of, *chap. xvi. 6.*) by one humbling judgment: after another, stripping them of that which they are proud of. (2.) He shall bring down the spoils of their hands, shall take from them that which they have got by spoil and rapine: he shall bring down the arms of their hands, which are lifted up against God's Israel; he shall quite break their power, and disable them to do mischief. (3.) He shall ruin all their fortifications, *ver. 12.* Moab hath his walls and his high forts, with which he hopes to secure himself, and from which he designs to annoy the people of God; but God shall bring them all down, lay them low, bring them to the ground, to the dust; and so they who trusted to them, will be left exposed. There is no fortress impregnable to omnipotence; no fort so high but the arm of the Lord can over-top it and bring it down. This destruction of Moab is typical of Christ's victory over death, spoken of *ver. 8.* his spoiling principalities and powers in his cross, *Col. ii. 15.* and his pulling down of Satan's strong-holds by the preaching of his gospel, 2 Cor. x. 4. and his reigning till all his enemies be made his footstool, Psalm cx. 1.

C H A P. XXVI.

This chapter is a song of holy joy and praise; in which the great things God hath engaged in the foregoing chapter to do for his people against his enemies and their enemies, are celebrated; it is prepared to be sung when that prophecy should be accomplished; for we must be forward to meet God with our thanksgiving, when he is coming towards us with his mercies. Now the people of God are here taught, (1.) To triumph in the safety and holy security both of the church in general, and of every particular member of it under the divine protection, ver. 1—4. (2.) To triumph over all opposing powers, ver. 5, 6. (3.) To walk with God, and wait for him in the worst and darkest times, ver. 7, 8, 9. (4.) To lament the stupidity of those who regarded not the providence of God, either merciful or afflictive, ver. 10, 11. (5.) To encourage themselves and one another, with hopes that God would still continue to do them good, ver. 12—14. and engage themselves to continue in his service, ver. 13. (6.) To recollect the providences of God that had been concerning them in their low and distressed condition, and their carriage under those providences, ver. 15—18. (7.) To rejoice in hope of a glorious deliverance, which should be as a resurrection to them, ver. 19. and to retire in the expectation of it, ver. 20, 21. And this is written for the support and assistance of the faith and hope of God's people in all ages, even those upon whom the ends of the world are come.

1. **I**N that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. 2. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. 4. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

To the prophecies of gospel-grace very fitly is a song annexed; in which we may give God the glory, and take to ourselves the comfort of that grace. In that day, the gospel-day, which the day of the victories and enlargements of the Old Testament church was typical of; to some of which perhaps this hath a primary reference: in that day this song shall be sung; there shall be persons to sing it, and cause and hearts to sing it; it shall be sung in the land of Judah, which was a figure of the gospel church; for the gospel-covenant is said to be made with the house of Judah, *Ileb. viii. 9.*

Glorious things are here said of the church of God:

1. That it is strongly fortified against those that are bad, ver. 1. *We have a strong city*: it is a city incorporated by the character of the everlasting covenant, fitted for the reception of all that are made free by that charter, for their employment and entertainment: it is a strong city, as Jerusalem was, while it was a city compact together, and had God himself a wall of fire round about it; so strong, that none would have believed that an enemy could ever have entered into the gates of Jerusalem, *Lam. iv. 12.* The church is a strong city, for it has walls and bulwarks, or counter-scars, and those of God's own appointing; for he has in his promise appointed salvation itself to be its defence. Those that are designed for salvation, that will be their protection, *1 Pet. 4.*

2. That it is richly replenished with those that are good, and those are instead of fortifications to it; for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, if they are such as they should be, are its strength, *Zech. xii. 5.* The gates are here ordered to be opened, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in, ver. 2. those had been banished and driven out by the iniquity of the former times, but now the laws that were made against them are repealed, and they have liberty to enter in again. Or, there is an act for a general naturalization of all the righteous, whatever nation they are of, encouraging them to come and settle in Jerusalem. When God hath done great things for any place or people, he expects that they should render according to the benefit done unto them, they should be kind unto his people, and take them under their protection, and into their bosom. Note, 1. It is the character of righteous men, that they keep the truths of God; a firm belief of which will have a mighty influence upon the regularity of the whole conversation. Good principles fixed in the head, will produce good resolutions in the heart, and good practices in the life. 2. It is the interest of states to countenance such, and count them among them, for they bring a blessing with them.

3. That all that belong to it are safe and easy, and have a holy security and serenity of mind in the assurance of God's favour. (1.) This is here the matter of a promise, ver. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace, in perfect peace*; inward peace, outward peace: peace with God, peace of conscience, peace at all times, under all events; this peace shall be put into, and kept in the possession of, whose mind is stayed upon God, because it trusteth in him. It is the character of a very good man, that he trusts in God; puts himself under his conduct and government, and depends upon him that it shall be vastly to his advantage to do so. They that trust in God must have their minds steady upon him, must trust in him at all times, under all events, must firmly and faithfully adhere to him, with an entire satisfaction in him. And such as do so God will keep in perpetual peace, and that peace shall keep them. When evil tidings are abroad, they shall calmly expect the event, and not be disturbed by frightful apprehensions arising from them, whose hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord, *Psal. cxlii. 7.* (2.) It is the matter of a precept, ver. 4. Let us make ourselves easy by trusting in the Lord for ever: since God has promised peace to those that stay themselves upon him, let us not lose the benefit of that promise: but repose an entire confidence in him. Trust in him for ever, i. e. at all times, when we have nothing else to trust to; trust in him for that peace, that portion which will be for ever; whatever we trust to for the world for, it will be but for a moment, all we expect from it is confined within the limits of time; but what we trust in God for, will last as long as we shall last. For in the Lord Jehovah, Jah, Jehovah, in him whom was, and is, and is to come, there is a rock of ages, a firm and lasting foundation for faith and hope to build upon: and the house built on that rock will stand in a storm. They that trust in God shall not only find in him, but receive from him everlasting strength; strength that will carry them to everlasting life, to that blessedness which is for ever; and therefore let them trust in him for ever, and never cast away or change their confidence.

5. ¶ For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust.

6. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy. 7. The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just. 8. Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. 9. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. 10. Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. 11. LORD when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed of their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

Here the prophet further encourageth us to trust in the Lord for ever, and to continue waiting on him: for,

1. He will make humble souls that trust in him, to triumph over their proud enemies, ver. 5, 6. They that exalt themselves shall be abased, for he bringeth down them that dwell on high; and wherein they deal proudly, he is and will be above them; even the lofty city, Babylon itself, or Nineveh, he lays it low, *chap. xxv. 12.* He can do it be it never so well fortified. He has done it many a time, he will do it, for he rebuffs the proud; it is his glory to do it, for he proves himself to be God by looking on the proud and abasing them, *Job xi. 12.* But, on the contrary, they that humble themselves shall be exalted; for the feet of the poor shall tread upon the lofty cities, ver. 6. He doth not say, great armies shall tread them down; but when God will have it done, even the feet of the poor shall do it, *Mat. iv. 3.* *Ye shall tread down the wicked: come, for we set on the necks of these kings.* See *Psal. cxlvii. 6.* *Rom. xvi. 20.*

2. He takes cognizance of the way of his people, and hath delight in it, ver. 7. *The way of the just is uprightness*; so it may be read; it is their endeavour and constant care, to walk with God in an even steady course of obedience and holy conversation, *my foot stands on an even place*, goes in an even path, *Psal. cxvi. 12.* And it is their happiness that God makes their way plain and easy before them; *Thou most upright dost level, or make even the path of the just*; by preventing or removing those things that would be stumbling-blocks to them; so that nothing shall offend them, *Psal. cxlii. 165.* God weighs it, (so we read it) he considers it, and will give them grace sufficient for them, to help them over all the difficulties they may meet with in their way. Thus with the upright, God will shew himself upright.

3. It is our duty, and will be our comfort to wait for God, and to keep up holy desires towards him in the darkest, and most discouraging times, ver. 8, 9. This has always been the practice of God's people, even then when God has frowned upon them; (1.) To keep up a constant dependence upon him; in the way of thy judgment we have still waited for thee; i. e. when thou hast corrected us, we have looked to no other hand but thine to relieve us; as the servant looks only to the hand of his master, till that he have mercy upon him, *Psal. cxlii. 2.* We cannot appeal from God's justice but to his mercy. If God's judgments continue long, if it be a road of judgments, for so the word signifies; yet we must not be weary, but continue waiting. (2.) To let out holy desires towards him; our troubles, how pressing soever, must never put us out of conceit with our religion, nor turn us away from God; but still the desire of our soul must be to his name, and to the remembrance of him; and in the night, the darkest, longest night of affliction, with our souls must we desire him. (1.) Our great concern must be for God's name, and our earnest desire that that may be glorified, whatever becomes of us and our names. This is that which we must wait for, and pray for; *Father, glorify thy name*, and we are satisfied. (2.) Our great comfort must be in the remembrance of that name, of all that whereby God has made himself known. The remembrance of God must be our great support and pleasure: and though sometimes we be unmindful of him, yet still our desire must be towards the remembrance of him, and we must take pains with our own hearts to have him always in mind. (2.) Our desires towards him must be inward, fervent, and sincere. With our soul we must desire him, with our soul we must pant after him, *Psal. xlii. 1.* and with our spirits within us, with the innermost thought, and the clearest application of mind, we must seek him. We make nothing of our religion, whatever our profession be, if we do not make heart-work of it. (4.) Even in the darkest night of affliction our desires must be towards God, as our sun and shield; for however God is pleased to deal with us, we must never think the worse of him, nor cool in our love to him. (5.) If our desires be indeed towards God, we must evidence it by seeking him, and seeking him early, as those that desire to find him, and dread the thoughts of missing him. They that would seek God and find him, must seek him early and seek him earnestly. Though we come never so early, we shall find him ready to receive us.

4. It is God's gracious design, in sending abroad his judgments, thereby to bring men to seek him and serve him. When the judgments are upon the earth, laying all waste, then we have reason to expect that not only God's professing people, but even the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness: will have their mistakes rectified and their lives reformed, will be brought to acknowledge God's righteousness in punishing them; will repent of their own unrighteousness in offending God, and so be brought to walk in right paths. They will do this, i. e. Judgments are designed to bring them to this, they have a natural tendency to produce this effect; and though many continue obstinate, yet some even of the inhabitants of the world will profit by this discipline, and will learn righteousness; sure they will, they are strangely stupid if they do not. Note, The intention of afflictions is to teach us righteousness; and blessed is the man whom God chastens and thus teaches, *Psal. xciv. 12.*

Disce justitiam, moniti, & non temere dices—Virg.

5. Those are wicked indeed, that will not be wrought upon by the favourable methods God takes to reduce and reform them; and it is necessary God should deal with them in a severe way by his judgments, which shall prevail to humble those that would not otherwise be humbled. Observe,

1. How sinners walk contrary to God, and refuse to comply with the means used for their reformation, and to answer the intentions of them, ver. 10.

(1.) Favour is shewed to them; they receive many mercies from God, he causeth his sun to shine, and his rain to fall upon them, may he prosper them, and into their hands he brings plentifully; they escape many of the strokes of God's judgments, which others less wicked than they, have been cut

cut off by; in some particular instances they seem to be remarkably favoured above their neighbours, and the design of all this is, that they may be won upon to love and serve God who thus favours them; and yet it is all in vain, they will not learn righteousness, will not be led to repentance by the goodness of God; and therefore it is requisite that God should send his judgments into the earth, to reckon with men for abused mercies.

(2.) They live in a land of uprightness; where religion is professed, and is in reputation, and the word of God preached, and where they have many good examples set them; in a land of evenness, where there are not so many stumbling-blocks as in other places: in a land of correction, where vice and profaneness are discountenanced and punished: yet there they will deal unjustly, and go on forwardly in their evil ways. They that do wickedly, deal unjustly both with God and man, and with their own souls: and those that will not be reclaimed by the justice of the nation, may expect the judgments of God upon them. Nor can they expect a place hereafter in the land of blessedness, who now conform not to the laws and usages, nor improve the privileges and advantages of the land of uprightness. And why do they not; it is because they will not behold the majesty of the Lord; will not believe, will not consider what a God of terrible majesty he is, whose laws and justice they persist in the contempt of. God's majesty appears in all the dispensations of his providence; but they regard it not, and therefore study not to answer the ends of those dispensations. Even when we receive of the mercy of the Lord we must still behold the majesty of the Lord, and his goodness.

(3.) God lifts up his hand to give them warning, that they may by repentance and prayer make their peace with him; but they take no notice of it, are not aware that God is angry with them, or coming forth against them; they will not see, and none so blind as those that will not see, that their eyes against the clearest conviction of guilt and wrath; who ascribe that to change, or common fate, which is manifestly a divine rebuke: who regard not the threatening symptoms of their own ruin, but cry peace to themselves when the righteous God is waging war with them.

2. How God will at length be too hard for them; for when he judgeth he will overcome; they will not see; but they shall see; shall be made to see, whether they will or no, that God is angry with them. Atheists, scorners, and the secure, will shortly feel what now they will not believe, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. They will not see the evil of sin, and particularly the sin of hating and persecuting the people of God; but they shall see, by the tokens of God's displeasure against them for it, and the deliverances in which God will plead his people's cause, that what is done against them he takes as done against himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. They shall see that they have done God's people a great deal of wrong, and therefore shall be ashamed of their enmity and envy towards them, and their ill usage to such as deserved better treatment. Note, Those that bear ill-will to God's people have a reason to be ashamed of it, so absurd and unreasonable it is; and sooner or later they shall be ashamed of it, and the remembrance of it shall fill them with confusion. Some read *they shall see and be confounded for the zeal of the people*; i. e. by the zeal God will show for his people; when they shall be made to know how jealous God is for the honour and welfare of his people, they shall be confounded to think that they might have been of that people, and would not. Their doom therefore is, that since they slighted the happiness of God's friends, the fire of his enemies shall devour them; i. e. that fire which is prepared for his enemies, and with which they shall be devoured; the fire designed for the devil and his angels. Note, Those that are enemies to God's people, and envy them, God looks upon as his enemies, and will deal with them accordingly.

12. ¶ LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. 13. O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. 14. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. 15. Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hast removed it far unto all the ends of the earth. 16. LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. 17. Like as a woman with child that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD. 18. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. 19. Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

The prophet in these verses looks back upon what God had done with them, both in mercy and judgment, and sings unto God of both; and then looks forward upon what he hoped God would do for them. Observe.

2. His reviews and reflections are mixed. When he looks back upon the state of the church, he finds, (1.) That God had in many instances been very gracious to them, and had done great things for them; ver. 12. *Thou hast wrought all our works in us*; or for us. Whatever good work is done by us, it is owing to a good work wrought by the grace of God in us; it is he that puts good thoughts and affections into our hearts, if at any time they be there, and that works in us both to will and do of his good pleasure: *Let us glorify*. And if any kindness be showed us, or any of our affairs be prosperous and successful, it is God that works it for us, and every creature, every business that is any way serviceable to our comforts, it is he that makes it to be so; and sometimes makes that to work for us, which seemed to make against us.

In particular, ver. 15. *Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord*, so that a little one is become a thousand, in Egypt they multiplied exceedingly, and afterwards in Canaan. So that they filled the land; and in this thou art glorified; for the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince; and therein God was glorified as faithful to his covenant with Abraham, that he would make him a father of many nations. Note, God's nation is a growing nation, and it is the glory of God that it is so. The increase of the church, that holy nation, is therefore to be rejoiced in, because it is

the increase of those that make it their business to glorify God in this world.

(2.) That yet he had laid them under his rebukes.

1. The neighbour nations had sometimes oppressed them, and tyrannized over them; ver. 13. *O Lord our God*, thou who hast the sole right to rule us, whose subjects and servants we are, to thee we complain (for whither else should we go with our complaints?) that other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: not only in the days of the judges, but afterwards God frequently sold them into the hands of their enemies; or rather, by their iniquity they sold themselves, Isa. lii. 4, 5. When they had been careless in the service of God, God suffered their enemies to have dominion over them, that they might know the difference between his service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. It may be understood as a confession of sin, their serving other gods, and subjecting themselves to the superstitious laws and customs of their neighbours, by which other lords (for they called their idols Baals, lords) had dominion over them besides God: but now they promise that it shall be so no more; from henceforth by the only will we make mention of thy name: i. e. we will worship thee only, and in that way only which thou hast instituted and appointed. The same may be our penitent reflection, *Other lords besides God have had dominion over us*; every lust has been our lord, and we have thus wronged both God and ourselves: the same therefore must be our pious resolution, that from henceforth we will make mention of God's name only, and by him only; that we will keep close to God, and to our duty, and never desert it.

2. They had sometimes been carried into captivity before their enemies. ver. 15. The nation which at first thou didst increase, and make to take root, thou hast now diminished and plucked up, and removed it to all the ends of the earth, driven it out to the uttermost parts of heaven, as is threatened, Deut. xxx. 4. and xxviii. 64. But observe, betwixt the mention of the increasing of them, and that of the removing of them, it is said, *thou art glorified*, for the judgments God inflicts upon his people for their sins, are for his honour, as well as the mercies he bestows upon them in performance of his promise.

3. He remembers that when they were thus oppressed, and carried captive, they cried unto God, which was a good evidence they neither had quite forsaken him, nor were quite forsaken of him; and that there were merciful intentions in the judgments they were under, ver. 16. *LORD, in trouble have they visited thee*. This was usual with the people of Israel, as we find frequently in the story of the judges; when other lords had dominion over them, they humbled themselves, and said, *The Lord is righteous*, 2 Chron. xii. 6. See here, (1.) The need we have of afflictions, they are necessary to stir up prayer; when it is said, *in trouble have they visited thee*, it is implied, that in their peace and prosperity they were strangers. God kept at a distance from him and seldom came near him: as if when the world smiled upon them, they had no occasion for his favours. (2.) The benefit we often have by afflictions; they bring us to God and quicken us to our duty, and shew us our dependence upon him; those that before seldom looked at God, now visited him: they come frequently, they become friendly, and make their court to him. Before, prayer came drop by drop, but now they pour out a prayer: it comes now like water from a fountain not like water from a still. They poured out a secret speech, so the margin: praying is speaking to God, but it is a secret speech; for it is the language of the heart, otherwise it is not praying. Afflictions bring us to secret prayer, in which we may be more free and particular in our addresses to him, than we can be in public. In affliction they will seek God early, who before sought him slowly, *Hes. v. 15*. It will make men fervent and fluent in prayer; they poured out a prayer, as the drink-offerings were poured out when thy chastening was upon them; but it is to be feared, when the chastening is off them, they will by degrees return to their former carelessness, as they had often done.

4. He complains, that their struggles for their own liberty had been very painful and perilous, but they had not been successful, ver. 17, 18.

1. They had the throws and pangs they dreaded. We have been like a woman in labour, that cries out in her pangs. We have with a great deal of anxiety and toil endeavoured to help ourselves, and our troubles have been increased by those attempts; as when Moses came to deliver Israel, the tale of bricks was doubled. Their prayers were quickened by the acuteness of their pains, and became as strong and vehement as the cries of a woman in fore travail. *So have we been in thy sight, O Lord*: It was a comfort and satisfaction to them in their distress, that God had his eye upon them, that all their miseries were in his sight; he was no stranger to their pangs or prayers; *LORD, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee*, Psal. xxxviii. 9. Whenever they came to present themselves before the Lord, with their complaints and petitions, they were in agonies like those of a woman in travail.

2. They came short of the issue and success they desired and hoped for, *We have been with child*; i. e. we have had great expectation of a speedy and happy deliverance, had been big with hopes, and when we have been in pain, have comforted ourselves with this, that the joyful birth would make us forget our misery, John xvi. 21. But alas, *we have as it were brought forth wind*; it has proved a false connection, our expectations have been frustrated, and our pains have been rather dying pains than travelling ones; we have had a mis-carrying womb and dry breasts. All our efforts have proved successful; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, for ourselves or for our friends and allies; but rather have made our own case and their's worse; neither have the inhabitants of the world, whom we have been contesting with, fallen before us, either in their power or in their hopes; but they are still as high and upish as ever. Note, A righteous cause may be strenuously pleaded both by prayer and endeavour, both with God and man; and yet for a great while may go by the worse, and the point not be gained.

2. His prospects and hopes are very pleasant. In general thou wilt ordain peace for us, ver. 12. i. e. all that good which the necessity of our case calls for. What peace the church has, or hopes for, it is of God's ordaining. And we may comfort ourselves with this, That what trouble soever may for a time be appointed to the people of God, peace will at length be ordained for them; for the end of these men is peace. And if God by his Spirit work all our work in us, he will ordain peace for us; for the work of righteousness shall be peace. And that is true and lasting peace, such as the world can neither give nor take away, which God ordains; for to those that have it shall be unchangeable as the ordinances of the day and of the night. And from what God has done for us, we may encourage ourselves to hope that he will yet farther do us good. Thou hast heard the desire of the humble, and therefore wilt, *Psal. x. 17*. And when this peace is ordained for us, then by thee only will we make mention of thy name, ver. 13. i. e. we will give the glory of it to thee only and not to any other. And we will depend upon thy grace only to enable us to do so; we cannot praise God's name, but to his strength.

Two things in particular the prophet here comforts the church with the prospect of.

1. The

1. The amazing ruin of her enemies, *ver. 11. They are dead, their other lords that have had dominion over us, their power is irrecoverably broken, they are quite cut off and extinguished; and they shall not live, shall never be able to put up head any more: being deceased, they shall not rise; but like Haman, when they have begun to fall before the seed of the Jews, they shall sink like a stone; because they are sentenced to this final ruin, therefore in pursuance of that sentence God himself hath visited them in wrath, as a righteous Judge, and hath cut off both the men themselves; he hath destroyed them, and the remembrance of them, they and their names are buried together in the dust: he hath made all their memory to perish; either they are forgotten, or made mention of with detestation: Note, The cause that is maintained in opposition to God and his kingdom among men, though it may prosper awhile, will certainly sink at last, and all that adhere to it will perish with it. The Jewish doctors comparing this with *ver. 19.* infer, that the resurrection of the dead belongs to the Jews only; and that those of other nations shall not rise. But we know better things; that all that are in their graves, shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and that this speaks of the final destruction of Christ's enemies, which is the second death.*

2. The surprising resurrection of her friends, *ver. 19.* Though the church rejoiceth not in the birth of a man-child, of which she travailed in pain, but hath as it were brought forth wind, *ver. 18.* yet the disappointment shall be balanced in a way equivalent; *thy dead men shall live:* those that were thought to be dead, who had received a sentence of death within themselves, who were cast out as if they had been naturally dead, they shall appear again in their former vigour: A spirit of life from God shall enter into the slain witnesses, and they shall prophecy again, *Rev. xi. 11. The dry bones shall live,* and become an exceeding great army, *Ezek. xxxvi. 20. together with my dead body shall they arise.* If we believe the resurrection of the dead, of our dead bodies at the last day, as Job did, and the prophet here, that will facilitate our belief of the promised restoration of the church's lustre and strength in this world. When God's time is come, how low soever she may be brought, they shall arise, even Jerusalem, the city of God, but now lying like a dead body, a carcase to which the eagles are gathered together; *Shod owns it still for his, so doth the prophet; but it shall arise, shall be rebuilt and flourish again.* And therefore let the poor, solitary, melancholy remains of it inhabitants, that dwell as in dust, awake and sing, for they shall see Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, a quiet habitation again, *chap. xxxiii. 20.* For the dew of God's favour shall be to it as the evening dew to the herbs, that were parched with the heat of the sun all day, shall revive and refresh them. And as the spring dews that water the earth, and make the herbs that lay buried in it to put forth and bud: so shall they flourish again, and the earth shall cast out the dead, as it cast the herbs out of their roots. The earth, in which they seemed to be lost, shall contribute to their revival. When the church and her interest are to be restored, neither the dew of heaven, nor the fatness of the earth, shall be wanting to do their parts towards it. Now this (as Ezekiel's vision, which is a comment upon it) may be fitly accommodated, (1.) To the spiritual resurrection of those that were dead in sin by the power of Christ's gospel and grace. So Dr. Lightfoot applies it, *Hor. Heb. in Job. xii. 24. The Gentiles shall live, with my body shall they rise; i. e. they shall be called in after Christ's resurrection, shall rise with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; nay, they shall arise my body; i. e. (saith he) they shall become the mystical body of Christ, and shall rise as part of him.* (2.) To the last resurrection; when dead saints shall live and rise together with Christ's dead body; for he rises as the first fruits, and believers shall rise by virtue of their union with him, and their communion in his resurrection.

20. ¶ Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be overpast. 21. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

These two verses are supposed not to belong to the song, which takes up the rest of the chapter; but to begin a new matter, and to be rather an introduction to the following chapter than the conclusion of this. Or, whereas in the foregoing song, the people of God had spoken to him, complaining of their grievances, here he returns an answer to their complaints. In which,

1. He invites them into their chambers, *ver. 20. Come my people, come to me, come with me:* He calls them no whither but where he himself will accompany them. Let the storm that disperseth others bring you nearer together. Come, and enter into thy chambers, stay not abroad, lest you be caught in the storm, as the Egyptians in the hail, *Exod. ix. 21.* (1.) Come into chambers of distinction, come into your own apartments, and continue not any longer mixed with the children of Babylon; *Come out from among them, and be ye separate, 2 Cor. vi. 17. Rev. xviii. 4.* If God hath set apart them that are godly for himself, they ought to set themselves apart. (2.) Into chambers of defence; in which by the secrecy, or by the strength of them, you may be safe in the worst of times. The attributes of God are the secret of his tabernacle, *Psal. xxvii. 5.* His name is a strong tower, into which we may run for shelter, *Prov. xviii. 10.* We must, by faith, find a way into these chambers, and there hide ourselves; *i. e.* with a holy security and serenity of mind, we must put ourselves under the divine protection. Come as Noah into the ark, for he shut the doors about him: when dangers are threatening, it is good to retire and lie hid, as Elijah did by the brook Cherith. (3.) Into chambers of devotion; enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, *Matt. vi. 6.* Be private with God; enter into thy chamber, to examine thyself, and commune with thine own heart, to pray and humble thyself before God. This work is to be done in times of distress and danger. And thus we hide ourselves; *i. e.* we recommend ourselves to God to hide us, and he will hide us either under heaven or in heaven. Israel must keep within doors when the destroying angel is slaying the first-born of Egypt, else the blood on the door-posts will not secure them: So must Rahab and her family, when Jericho is destroyed. Those are most safe that are least seen, *Qui bene latuit, bene vixit.*

2. He assures them that their trouble would be over in a very short time: they should not long be in any fright or peril, hide thyself for a moment, the smallest part of time we can conceive; like an atom of matter; nay, if you can imagine one moment shorter than another; it is but for a little moment, and that with a quasi too; as it were for a little moment less than you think of; when it is over it will seem as nothing to you, you will wonder how soon it is gone: You shall not need to lie long in confinement, long in concealment, the indignation will presently be overpast; *i. e.* the indignation of the enemies against you, their persecuting power and rage,

which forceth you to abscond, when the wicked rise a man is hid: This will soon be over, God will cut them off, will break their power, and defeat their purposes, and find a way for your enlargement. When Athanasius was banished Alexandria by an edict of Julian's, and his friends greatly lamented it, he bid them be of good cheer; *Nubecula est que cito pertransibit*, it is a little cloud that will soon blow over: *You shall have tribulation ten days, that is all, Rev. ii. 10.* This enables God's suffering people to call their afflictions light, that they are but for a moment.

3. He assures them that their enemies should be reckoned with for all the mischief they had done them by the sword, either of war or persecution *ver. 21. The Lord will punish them for the blood they have shed.* Here is, (1.) The judgment set, and process issued out; *The Lord comes out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity*, in giving such disturbance to all about them. There is a great deal of iniquity among the inhabitants of the earth; but though they all combine in it, though hand join in hand to carry it on, yet it shall not go unpunished. Besides the everlasting punishment into which the wicked shall go hereafter, there are often remarkable punishments of cruelty, oppression, and persecution, in this world. When men's indignation is over-past, and they have done their worst, let them then expect God's indignation, for he sees that his day is coming, *Psal. xxxvii. 13. God comes out of his place to punish, i. e. he shows himself in an extraordinary manner from heaven, the signment of his power: from the sanctuary, the residence of his grace: He is raised up out of his holy habitation, where he seemed before to conceal himself, and now he will do something great, the product of his wise, and just, and secret counsels; as a prince that goes to take the chair or take the field, Zech. ii. 13.* Some observe, that God's place is the mercy-seat, there he delights to be when he punisheth, he comes out of his place, for he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners. (2.) The criminals convicted by the notorious evidence of the fact. *The earth shall disclose her blood;* the innocent blood, the blood of the saints and martyrs, which hath been shed upon the earth like water, and has soaked in it, and been concealed and covered by it, shall now be brought to light, and brought to account; for God will make inquisition for it, and will give those that shed blood to drink for they are worthy. Secret murders, and other secret wickednesses, shall be discovered sooner or later: And the stain which the earth has long covered, she shall no longer cover, but they shall be produced as evidence against the murderers. The voice of Abel's blood cries from the earth, *Gen. iv. 10, 11. John xx. 27.* Those sins which seemed to have been buried in oblivion, will be called to mind, and called over again when the day of reckoning comes. Let God's people therefore wait a while with patience, for behold the judge standeth before the door.

CHAP. XXVII.

In this chapter the prophet goes on to show, (1.) What great things God would do for his church and people, which should now shortly be accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, and the destruction of the Assyrian army: but it is expressed generally for the encouragement of the church after ages, with reference to the power and prevalency of the energies of it: (1.) That proud oppressors should be reckoned with, *ver. 1.* (2.) That care should be taken of the church, as of God's vineyard, *ver. 2, 3.* (3.) That God would let fall his controversy with them upon their return to him, *ver. 4, 5.* (4.) That he would greatly multiply and increase them, *ver. 6.* (5.) That as to their afflictions, the property of them should be removed, *ver. 7.* they should be mitigated and moderated, *ver. 8.* and farthest, *ver. 9.* (6.) That though it might be laid waste, and made desolate for a time, *ver. 10, 11.* yet it should be restored, and the scattered members should be gathered together again, *ver. 12, 13.* And all this is applicable to the grace of the gospel, and God's promises to, and providences concerning, the Christian church, and such as belong to it.

1. IN that day the LORD with his sore and great sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea. 2. In that day sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine. 3. I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. 4. Fury is not in me: who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them. I would burn them together. 5. Or let him take hold of my strength. that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me. 6. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

The prophet is here singing of judgment and mercy.

1. Of judgment upon the enemies of God's church, *ver. 1. Tribulation to them that trouble it, 2 Thess. i. 6.* When the Lord comes out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth, *chap. xxvi. 21.* he will be sure to punish leviathan, the dragon that is in the sea: every proud, oppressing tyrant that is the terror of the mighty, and like the leviathan, is so fierce that none dare stir him up, and his heart is as hard as a stone, and when he raiseth up himself the mighty are afraid, *Job xli. 10—24, 25.* The church has many enemies, but commonly some one that is more formidable than the rest: So Sennacherib was in his day, and Nebuchadnezzar in his, and Antichrist in his: So Pharaoh had been formerly, and he is called leviathan, and the dragon, *Psal. lxxiv. 14. Isa. li. 9. Ezek. xxiv. 3.* And the New Testament church has had its leviathans; we read of a great red dragon to devour it, *Rev. xii. 3.* Those malignant, persecuting powers are here compared to the leviathan for bulk and strength, and the mighty buffet they make in the word; to dragons, for their rage and fury; to serpents, piercing serpents, penetrating in their counsels, quick in their motions, that if they once get in their head, would soon wind in their whole body; crawling like a bar, so the margin, standing in the way of all their neighbours, and obstructing them; to crooked serpents, subtle and insinuating, but perverse and mischievous. Great and mighty princes if they oppose the people of God, are in God's account as dragons and serpents, and plagues of mankind. And the Lord will punish them in due time. They are too big for men to deal with, and call to an account, and therefore the great God will take the doing of it into his own hands: He hath a sore, and great, and strong sword, wherewith to do execution upon them, when the measure of their iniquity is full, and their day is come to fall. It is emphatically expressed in the original; the Lord with his sword, that cruel one, and that

great one, and that strong one shall punish this unwieldy, this unruly criminal : and it shall be capital punishment, *he shall slay the dragon that is in the seas* ; for the wages of sin is death. Which shall not only be a prevention of his doing further mischief, as the slaying of a wild beast : but a just punishment for the mischief he has done, as the putting of a traitor or rebel to death. God hath a strong sword for the doing of this ; variety of judgments sufficient to humble the proudest, and break the most powerful of his enemies ; and he will do it when the day of execution comes. In that day he will punish ; his day which is coming, *Psal. xxxvii. 13.* This is applicable to the spiritual victories obtained by our Lord Jesus over the powers of darkness. He not only disarmed, spoiled, and cast out the prince of this world ; but with his strong sword, the virtue of his death, and the preaching of his gospel, he doth and will *destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*, that great leviathan, that old serpent the dragon. He shall be bound that he may not deceive the nations, and that is a punishment to him, *Rev. xx. 2, 3.* And at length for deceiving the nations he shall be *cast into the lake of fire*, *Rev. xx. 11.*

2. Of mercy to the church ; in that same day when God is punishing the leviathan, let the church and all her friends be easy and cheerful ; let those that attend her sing to her for her comfort, sing her asleep with these assurances, let it be sung in her assemblies.

1. That she is God's vineyard, and is under his particular care, *ver. 2, 3.* She is in God's eye a vineyard of red wine. The world is as a fruitless worthless wilderness ; but the church is inclosed as a vineyard, a peculiar place and of value, that has great care taken of it, and great pains taken with it, and from which precious fruits are gathered, wherewith they honour God and man. It is a vineyard of red wine, yielding the best and choicest grapes ; intimating the reformation of the church, that it now brings forth good fruit unto God ; whereas before it brought forth fruit to itself, or brought forth wild grapes, *chap. v. 4.*

Now God takes care, (1.) Of the safety of this vineyard : *I the Lord do keep it* : He speaks this as glorying in it, that he is and hath undertaken to be the keeper of Israel : those that bring forth fruit to God, are and shall be always under his protection. He speaks this as assuring us that they shall be so ; *I the Lord that can do every thing, but cannot lie nor deceive, I do keep it, lest any hurt it ; I will keep it night and day.* God's vineyard in this world has much exposed to injury ; there are many that would hurt it, would tread it down and lay it waste, *Psal. lxxx. 13.* but God will suffer no real hurt or damage to be done it, but what will bring good out of it. He will keep it constantly, night and day ; and not without need, for the enemies are restless in their designs and attempts against it, and both night and day seeking an opportunity to do it mischief. God will keep it in the night of affliction and persecution ; and in the day of peace and prosperity, the temptations of which are no less dangerous. God's people shall be preserved not only from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, but from the destruction that wasteth at noon day, *Psal. xvi. 6.* This vineyard shall be well fenced. (2.) Of the fruitfulness of this vineyard : *I will water it every moment*, and yet it shall not be over-watered. The still and silent dews of God's grace and blessing, shall continually descend upon it, that it may bring forth much fruit. We need the constant and continual waterings of the divine grace ; for if that be at any time withdrawn, we wither and come to nothing. God waters his vineyard by the minister, of the word, by his servants the prophets, whose doctrine shall drop as the dew : Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God gives the increase ; for without him the watchman wakes, and the husbandman waters in vain.

2. That though sometimes he contends with his people, yet upon their submission he will be reconciled to them, *ver. 4, 5.* Fury is not in him towards his vineyard : though he meets with many things in it that are offensive to him, yet he doth not seek advantages against, nor is extreme to mark what is amiss in it. It is true, if he finds in it briars and thorns instead of vines, and they be set in battle against him, as indeed that in the vineyard which is not for him is against him ; he will tread them down, and burn them : but otherwise, if I am angry with my people, they know what course to take ; let them humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and so take hold of my strength with a sincere desire to make their peace with me, and I will soon be reconciled to them, and all shall be well. God sees the sins of his people, and is displeased with them ; but upon their repentance he turns away his wrath.

This may very well be construed as the summary of the doctrine of the gospel, with which the church is to be watered every moment. (1.) Here is a quarrel supposed between God and man ; for here is a battle fought, and peace to be made : It is an old quarrel ever since sin first entered ; it is on God's part a righteous quarrel, but on man's part most unrighteous. (2.) Here is a gracious invitation given us to take up this quarrel, and to get these matters in variance accommodated : let him that is desirous to be at peace with God take hold of his strength ; on his strong arm, which is lifted up against the sinner to strike him dead, and let him by supplication keep back the stroke ; let him wrestle with me as Jacob did, resolving not to let me go without a blessing ; and he shall be Israel, a prince with God. Pardon-mercy is called the power of our Lord ; let him take hold on that, *Christ is the arm of the Lord*, *Isa. liii. 1.* *Christ crucified the power of God*, *1 Cor. i. 24.* let him by a lively faith take hold on him as a man that is sinking catches hold of a bough, or cord, or plank, that is in his reach ; or as the malefactor took hold on the horns of the altar, believing that there is no other name by which he can be saved, by which he can be reconciled.

(3.) Here is a threefold cord for arguments to persuade us to do this. (1.) Time and space is given us to do it in, for fury is not in God : he doth not carry it towards us, as great men carry it towards their inferiors, when the one is in a fault, and the other in a fury. Men in a fury will not take time for consideration ; it is with them but a word and a blow. Furious men are soon angry, and implacable when they are angry ; a little thing provokes them, and no little thing will pacify them : but it is not so with God, he considers our frame, is slow to anger ; doth not stir up all his wrath, nor always chide. (2.) It is in vain to think of contending with him : If we persist in our quarrel with him, and think to make our part good, it is but like setting briars and thorns before a consuming fire ; which will be so far from giving check to the progress of it, that they will but make it burn the more outrageously. We are not an equal match for Omnipotence : Woe unto him therefore that strives with his maker : He knows not the power of his anger. (3.) This is the only way, and it is a sure way to reconciliation, let him take this course to make peace with me, and he shall make peace ; and thereby good, all good shall come unto him. God is willing to be reconciled to us, if we be but willing to be reconciled to him.

3. That the church of God in the world shall be a growing body, and come at length to be a great body, *ver. 6.* *In times to come* (so some read it) *in after times*, when these calamities are overpast ; or in the days of the gospel, the latter days, he shall cause Jacob to take root, deeper root than ever yet ; for the gospel-church shall be more firmly fixed than ever the Jewish church was, and shall spread farther. Or he shall cause them of Jacob, that come back out of their captivity ; or as we read it, *them that come of Jacob, to take root, downward and bear fruit upward*, *chap. xxxvii. 31.*

They shall be established in a prosperous state, and then they shall blossom and bud, and give hopeful prospects of a great increase ; and so it shall prove, *for they shall fill the face of the world with fruit.* Many shall be brought into the church, profelytes shall be numerous ; some out of all the nations about, that shall be to the God of Israel for a name and a praise : and the converts shall be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness ; the preaching of the gospel brought forth fruit in all the world, *Col. i. 6.* fruit that remains, *John xv. 16.*

7. ¶ Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him ? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him ? 8. In measure when he shooreth forth, thou wilt debate with it ; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east-wind. 9. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin ; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up. 10. Yet the fenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness : there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof. 11. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off ; the women come and set them on fire : for it is a people of no understanding : therefore he that made them will shew them no favour. 12. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river into the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. 13. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the out-casts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Here is the prophet again singing of mercy and judgment, not as before judgment to the enemies, and mercy to the church : but judgment to the church, and mercy mixed with that judgment.

1. Here is judgment threatened even to Jacob and Israel ; they shall blossom and bud *ver. 6.* But, (1.) They shall be smitten and slain, *ver. 7.* Some of them shall ; if God finds any thing amiss among them, he shall lay them under the tokens of his displeasure for it. Judgment shall begin at the house of God, and those whom God hath known of all the families of the earth, he will punish in the first place. (2.) Jerusalem, their fenced city shall be desolate, *ver. 10, 11.* God having tried variety of methods with them for their reformation, which as to many have proved ineffectual, he will for a time lay their country waste, which was accomplished when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans ; then that habitation was for a long time forsaken. If lesser judgments do not do the work, God will send greater : for when he judgeth he will overcome. Jerusalem had been a fenced city ; not so much by art or nature, as by grace and the divine protection ; but when God was provoked to withdraw, her defence was departed from her, and then she was left like a wilderness. And in the pleasant gardens of Jerusalem cattle shall feed, shall lie down there ; and there shall be none to disturb them or drive them away, there they shall be levat and couchant, and they shall eat the tender branches of the fruit trees : which perhaps farther signifies that the people should become an easy prey to their enemies ; when the boughs thereof are withered as they grow upon the tree, being blasted by winds and frosts, and not pruned, they shall be broken off for fuel, and the women and children shall come and set them on fire. There shall be a total destruction, for the very trees shall be destroyed : And this is a figure of the deplorable state of the vineyard, *ver. 2.* when it brought forth wild grapes, *chap. v. 2.* and our Saviour seems to refer to this, when he saith of the branches of the vine which abide not in him, that they are *cast forth and withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned*, *John xv.* which was in a particular manner fulfilled in the unbelieving Jews.

The similitude is explained in the following words, *It is a people of no understanding*, brutish and sottish, and destitute of the knowledge of God, and that have no relish or favour of divine things, like a withered branch that has no sap in it ; and this is at the bottom of all those things for which God left them desolate, their idolatry first and afterwards their infidelity. Wicked people, however in other things they may be wits and politicians, in their great concerns they are of no understanding ; and their ignorance being wilful, that shall not only not be their excuse, but it shall be the ground of their condemnation ; for therefore, *he that made them*, that gave them their being, *will not have mercy on them*, nor save them from the ruin they bring upon themselves ; and *he that formed them* into a people, formed them for himself, to shew forth his praise : seeing they do not answer the end of their formation, but hate to be reformed, to be new formed, will reject them and shew them no favour, and then they are undone, for if he that made us by his power, do not make us happy in his favour, we had better never have been made. Sinners flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, at least that they shall not be dealt with so severely as their ministers tell them, because God is merciful, and because he is their maker ; but here we see how weak and insufficient those pleas will be ; for if they be of no understanding, he that made them, though he made them, and hateth nothing that he hath made, and though he has mercy in store for those who so far understand themselves as to apply themselves to him for it, yet on them he will have no mercy and will shew them no favour.

2. He has a great deal of mercy mixed with this judgment ; for there are good people mixed with those that are corrupt and degenerate, a remnant according to the election of grace, on whom God will have mercy and to whom he will shew favour ; and these promises seem to point at all the calamities of the church, to which God would graciously provide these allays.

1. Though they should be smitten and slain, yet not to that degree and in that manner that their enemies should be smitten and slain, *ver. 7.* God hath smitten Jacob and Israel, and he is slain ; many of them that understand among the people, yet shall fall by the sword and by flame many days, *Dan. xi. 33.* But it shall not be as those are smitten and slain. (1.) That smote him formerly, that were the rod of God's anger and the staff in his hand, which he made use of for the correction of his people, and to whose turn it shall come to be reckoned with even for that the child is spared, but

the rod is burned. (2.) That shall afterwards be slain by him, when he shall get the dominion and repay them in their own coin; or slain for his sake in the pleading of his cause. God's people and God's enemies are here represented, (1.) As struggling with each other, so the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have been, are, and will be; in this contest there are slain on both sides. God makes use of wicked men not only to smite but slay his people; for they are his sword, *Psal. xvii. 13.* But when the cup of trembling comes to be put into their hand, it will be much worse with them than ever it was with God's people in their greatest straits: the seed of the woman has only his heel bruised, but the serpent hath his head crushed and broken. Note, Though God's persecuted people may be great losers and great sufferers for a while, yet they that oppress them will prove to be greater losers and greater sufferers at last, here or hereafter; for God will render double to them, *Rev. xviii. 6.* (2.) As sharing together in the calamities of this present time, they are both smitten, both slain, and both by the hand of God; for there is *one event to the righteous and to the wicked*, but is Jacob smitten as his enemies are? No, by no means; to him the property is altered, and it becomes quite another thing. Note, However it may seem to us, there is really a vast difference between the afflictions and deaths of good people, and the afflictions and deaths of wicked people.

2. Though God will debate with them, yet it shall be in measure, and the affliction shall be mitigated, and moderated, and proportioned to their strength, not to their deserts, *ver. 8.* He will deal out afflictions to them, as the wise physician prescribes medicines to his patient, just such a quantity of each ingredient, or orders how much blood shall be taken when he breathes a vein: thus God orders the troubles of his people, not suffering them to be tempted above what they are able, *1 Cor. x. 13.* He measures out their afflictions by a little at a time, that they may not be pressed above measure: for he knows their frame, and corrects in judgment and doth not stir up all his wrath. When the affliction is shooting forth, when he is sending it out and giving it its commission, then he debates in measure, and not in extremity; he considers what he can bear, then he begins to correct: and when he proceeds in his controversy, so that it is *the day of his east-wind*, which is not only blustering and noisy, but blasting and noxious; yet he stays his rough wind, checks it and sets bounds to it, doth not suffer it to blow land as it was feared: when he is winnowing his corn it is with a gentle gale, that shall only blow away the chaff, but not the good corn, God hath the winds at his command, and every affliction under his check; *Hitherto it shall go, but no farther.* Let us not despair when things are at the worst; be the winds never so rough, never so high, God can say unto them, *Peace, be still.*

3. Though God will afflict them, yet he will make their afflictions to work for the good of their souls, and correct them as the father doth the child, to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts, *ver. 9.* By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged. This is the design of the affliction, to this it is adapted as a proper means; and by the grace of God working with it, it shall have this blessed effect; it shall mortify the habits of sin; by this those defilements of the soul shall be purged away; it shall break them off from the practice of it; this is all the fruit: this is it that God intends; this is all the harm it will do them, to take away their sin; than which they could not have a greater kindness done them, though it be at the expence of an affliction. Therefore because the affliction is mitigated and moderated, and the rough wind stayed, therefore we may conclude that he designs their reformation, not their destruction, and because he deals thus gently with us, we should therefore study to answer his ends in afflicting us. The particular sin which the affliction was intended to cure them of was the sin of idolatry, the sin which did most easily beset that people, and to which they were strangely addicted; *Ephraim is joined to idols.* But by the captivity in Babylon, they were not only weaned from this sin, but set against it; *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* Jacob then hath his sin taken away, his beloved sin, when he maketh all the stones of his altar, of his idolatrous altar, the stones of which were precious and sacred to him, as *chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder*; he not only hath them in contempt, and values them no more than chalk-stones, but he conceives an indignation at them, and in a holy revenge beats them asunder as easily as chalk-stones are broken to pieces: the groves and the images shall not stand before this penitent, but they shall be thrown down too, never to be set up again. This was according to the law for the demolishing and destroying of all the monuments of idolatry, *Deut. vii. 5.* and according to this promise, since the captivity in Babylon, no people in the world have such a rooted aversion to idols and idolatry as the people of the Jews. Note, The design of affliction is to part between us and sin, especially that which has been our own iniquity; and then it appears that the affliction hath done us good, when we keep at a distance from the occasions of sin, and use all needful precaution that we may not only not relapse in it, but not so much as to be tempted to it, *Psal. cxix. 67.*

4. Though Jerusalem shall be desolate and forsaken for a time, yet there will come a day when its scattered friends shall resort to it again out of all the countries whither they are dispersed, *ver. 12, 13.* though the body of the nation is abandoned as a people of no understanding, yet those that are indeed children of Israel shall be gathered together again as the sheep of the flock, when the shepherds that scattered them are reckoned with, *Ezek. xxxiv. 10, 11, 12.* Now observe concerning these scattered Israelites, (1.) From whence they shall be fetched; *the Lord shall beat them off as fruit from the tree, or beat them out as corn out of the ear*; he shall find them out, and separate them from those whom they dwell among, and with whom they seemed to be incorporated, from the channel of the river Euphrates north-east, unto Nile the stream of Egypt which lay south-west; those that were driven into the land of Assyria, and were captives there in the land of their enemies, where they were ready to perish for want of necessities, and ready to despair of deliverance; and those that were *out-casts in the land of Egypt*, whither many of those that were left behind after the captivity in Babylon went contrary to God's express command, *Jer. xliii. 6.* and there lived as out-casts; God hath mercy in store for them all, and will make it to appear, that though they are cast out, they are not cast off. (2.) In what manner they shall be brought back, ye shall be gathered one by one, not in multitudes, not in troops forcing your way; but silently, and as it were by stealth, dropping in first one, and then another. This intimates that the remnant that shall be saved consists but of few, and those saved with difficulty, and so as by fire, scarcely saved: they shall not come for company, but as God shall stir up every man's spirit. (3.) By what means they shall be gathered together; *the great trumpet shall be blown*, and then they shall come. Cyrus's proclamation of liberty to the captives is this great trumpet, which awakened the Jews that were asleep in the thraldom to bestir themselves: it was like the sounding of the Jubilee trumpet which published the year of release. This is applicable both to the preaching of the gospel, by which sinners are gathered in to the grace of God, such as were out-casts and ready to perish; those that were afar off are made nigh. The gospel proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord. And also to the archangel's trumpet at the last day, by which saints shall be gathered to the glory of

God, that lay as out-casts in their graves. (4.) For what end they shall be gathered together; *to worship the Lord at the holy mount of Jerusalem.* When the captives rallied again and returned to their own land, the chief thing they had their eye upon, and the first thing they applied themselves to, was the worship of God: the holy temple was in ruins, but they had the holy mount, the place of the altar, *Gen. xiii. 4.* Liberty to worship God is the most valuable and desirable liberty: and after restraints and dispersions, a free access to his house should be more welcome to us than a free access to our own houses. Those that are gathered by the sounding of the gospel-trumpet, are brought in to worship God and added to the church; and the great trumpet of all will gather the saints together to serve God day and night in his temple.

C H A P. XXVIII.

In this chapter, (1.) Ephraim is reproved and threatened for their pride and drunkenness, their security and sensuality, *ver. 1—8.* But in the midst of this, here is a gracious promise of God's favour to the remnant of his people, *ver. 5, 6.* (2.) They are likewise reproved and threatened for their dulness and stupidity, and unaptness to profit by the instructions which the prophets gave them in God's name, *ver. 9—13.* (3.) The rulers of Jerusalem are reproved and threatened for their insolent contempt of God's judgments, and setting them at defiance; and after a gracious promise of Christ and his grace, they are made to know that the vain hopes of escaping the judgments of God with which they flattered themselves, would certainly deceive them, *ver. 14—22.* (4.) All this is confirmed by a comparison borrowed from the method which the husbandman takes with his ground and grain, according to which they must expect God would proceed with his people, whom he had lately called his threshing, and the corn of his floor, *chap. xxi. 10, ver. 23—26.* And this is written for our admonition, and is profitable for reproof and warning to us.

WOE to the crown of pride, to the drunkards for Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower which are on the head of the fat vallies of them that are overcome with wine! 2. Behold, the LORD hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. 3. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet. 4. And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer: which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up. 5. ¶ In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people. 6. And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate. 7. ¶ But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way: the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. 8. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

Here, The prophet warns the kingdom of the ten tribes of the judgments that were coming upon them for their sins, which were soon after executed by the king of Assyria, who laid their country waste and carried the people into captivity. Ephraim had his name from fruitfulness, their soil being very fertile, and the products of it abundant, and the best of the kind: they had a great many fat vallies, *ver. 1—1,* and Samaria, which was situated on a hill, was as it were on the head of the fat vallies; their country was rich and pleasant, and as the garden of the Lord; it was the glory of Canaan, as that was the glory of all lands: their harvest and vintage was the glorious beauty on the head of their vallies, which were covered over with corn and vines. Now observe,

1. What an ill use they made of their plenty; what God gave them to serve him with, they perverted and abused by making it the food and fuel of their lusts.

(1.) They were puffed up with pride by it; the goodness with which God crowned their years, which should have been to him a crown of praise, was to them a crown of pride. They that are rich in the world, are apt to be high-minded, *1 Tim. vi. 17.* Their king that wore the crown, was proud that he ruled over so rich a country; Samaria, their royal city, was notorious for pride. Perhaps it was usual at their festivals or revels to wear garlands made up of flowers and ears of corn, which they wore in honour of their fruitful country. Pride was a sin that generally prevailed among them, and therefore the prophet in his name who resists the proud, boldly proclaims a *Woe to the crown of pride.* If those that wear crowns be proud of them, let them not think to escape this woe. What men are proud of, be it never so mean, is to them as a crown; he that is proud thinks himself as great as a king; but woe to those who thus exalt themselves, for they shall be abased; their pride is the preface to their destruction.

(2.) They indulged themselves in sensuality; Ephraim was notorious for drunkenness and excess of riot; Samaria, the head of the fat vallies, was full of those that were overcome with wine, were broken with it, so the margin. See how foolishly drunkards act, and no marvel, when in the very commission of the sin, they make fools and brutes of themselves; they yield, (1.) To be conquered by the sin; it overcomes them, and brings them into bondage, *2 Pet. ii. 19.* they are led captive by it, and the captivity is the more shameful and inglorious that is voluntary. Some of these wretched slaves have themselves owned, that there is not a greater drudgery in the world than hard drinking; They are overcome not with the wine, but with the love of it. (2.) To be ruined by it, they are broken by wine; their constitution is broken by it, and their health ruined; they are broken in their callings and estates, and their families are brought to ruin by it; Their peace with God is broken, and their souls in danger of being eternally undone, and all this for the gratification of a base lust; woe to these drunkards of Ephraim. Ministers must bring the general woes of the world

word home to particular places and persons : We must say, Woe to drunkards, their condition is a woful condition, their brutish pleasures are to be pitied and not envied; *they shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 10. the curse is in force against them, *Deut. xxix. 19, 20.* Nay, we must go farther and say, woe to the drunkards of such a place, that they may hear and fear; nay, and woe to this or that person, if he be a drunkard. There is a particular woe to the drunkards of Ephraim, for they are of God's professing people, and it worst becomes them of any other; they know better things, and therefore should give a better example. Some make the crown of pride to belong to the drunkards, and to mean the garlands with which they were crowned that got the victory in their wicked drinking matches, and drunk down the rest of the company; they were proud of their being mighty to drink wine; but woe to them who thus glory in their shame.

2. The justice of God in taking away their plenty from them, which they thus abused; Their glorious beauty, the plenty they were proud of, is but a fading flower, it is meat that perisheth. The most substantial fruits if God blasts them and blows upon them, are but fading flowers. *ver. 1.* God can easily take away their corn in the season thereof, *Hos. ii. 9.* and recover *locum vastatum*, those goods of his which they prepared for Baal. God has an officer ready to make a seizure for him, hath one at his beck, a mighty and strong one, who is able to do the business, even the king of Assyria, who shall cast down to the earth with the hand, *i. e.* shall easily and effectually, and with the turn of a hand destroy all that which they are proud of and pleased with, *ver. 2.* He shall throw it down to the ground to be broken to pieces with a strong hand, with a hand that they cannot oppose. Then the crown of pride, and the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under foot, *ver. 3.* they shall lie exposed to contempt, and shall not be able to recover themselves. Drunkards in their folly are apt to talk proudly and vaunt themselves most then, when they most shame themselves; but they render themselves the more ridiculous by it. The beauty of their val-lies which they gloried in, will be, (1.) Like a fading flower as before, *ver. 1.* it will wither of itself, and has in itself the principles of its own corruption, it will perish in time by its own moth and rust. (2.) Like the hasty fruit, which as soon as it is discovered, is plucked and eaten up, so the wealth of this world, besides that it is apt to decay of itself, is subject to be devoured by others, as greedily as the first ripe fruit, which is earnestly desired, *Mat. vii. 1.* Thieves break through and steal. The harvest which the worldling is proud of, the hungry eateth up, *Job v. 5.* no sooner do they see the prey, but they catch at it, and swallow up all they can lay their hands on. It is likewise easily devoured, as that fruit which being ripe, before it is grown is very small, and is soon eaten up; and there being little of it, and that of little worth, it is not reserved, but used presently.

2. He next turns himself to the kingdom of Judah, whom he calls the residue of his people, *ver. 5.* for there were but two tribes to the other ten.

1. He promised them God's favours, and that they should be taken under his conduct and protection, when the beauty of Ephraim shall be left exposed to be trodden down and eaten up, *ver. 5, 6.* In that day, when the Assyrian army is laying Israel waste, and Judah might think that their neighbour's house being on fire, their own was in danger, in that day of treading down and perplexity, then God will be to the residue of his people all they need and can desire; not only to the kingdom of Judah, but to those of Israel who had kept their integrity, and probably betook themselves to the land of Judah, to be sheltered by good king Hezekiah: When the Assyrian, that mighty one, was in Israel as a tempest of hail, noisy, and battering, as a destroying storm bearing down all before it, especially at sea, and as a flood of mighty waters overflowing the country, *ver. 2.* then in that day will the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, distinguish his people by peculiar favours, that have distinguished themselves by a steady and singular adherence to him, and that which they most need he will himself be to them. This very much enhanceth the word of the promises, that God covenanting to be to his people a God all-sufficient, undertakes to be himself all that to them that they can desire. (1.) He will put all that credit and honour upon them which is requisite not only to rescue them from contempt, but to gain them esteem and reputation; He will be to them for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty. They that wore the crown of pride looked upon God's people with disdain, and trampled upon them, and they were the song of the drunkards of Ephraim; but God will so appear for them by his providence, as to make it evident that they have his favour towards them, and that shall be to them for a crown of glory; for what greater glory can any people have than for God to own them as his own? And he will so appear in them by his grace, as to make it evident that they have his image renewed on them, and that shall be to them a diadem of beauty; for what greater beauty can any person have than the beauty of holiness? Note, Those that have God for their God have him for a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty; for they are made to him kings and priests. (2.) He will give them all that wisdom and grace which is necessary in the due discharge of the duty of their place: He will himself be a spirit of judgment to them that sit in judgment: the privy-counsellors shall be guided by wisdom and discretion, and the judges governed by justice and equity. It is a great mercy to any people, when those that are called to places of power and public trust are qualified for their places; when those that sit in judgment have a spirit of judgment, a spirit of government. (3.) He will give them all that courage and boldness which is requisite to carry them resolutely through the difficulties and oppositions they are like to meet with; He will be for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate, to the gates of the enemy whose cities they besiege, or to their own gates, when they fall out upon the enemies that besiege them. The strength of the soldiery depends as much upon God as the wisdom of the magistracy; and where God gives both these, he is to that people a crown of glory. This may well be supposed to refer to Christ, and to the Chaldee paraphrase understands it: In that day shall the Messiah be a crown of glory; Solomon calls him the glory of his people Israel; and he is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, and strength.

2. He complains of the corruptions that were found among them, and the many corrupt ones, *ver. 7.* But they also, many of them of Judah have erred through wine. There are drunkards of Jerusalem as well as drunkards of Ephraim; and therefore the mercy of God is to be so much the more admired, that he has not blasted the glory of Judah as he has done that of Ephraim. Sparing mercy is very obliging, when it is thus distinguishing, Ephraim's sins are found in Judah, and yet not Ephraim's ruin. They have erred through wine; their drinking to excess is itself a practical error, they think to raise their fancy by it; but they ruin their judgment, and so put a cheat upon themselves; think to preserve their health by it, and help digestion; but they spoil their constitution, and hasten diseases and death. And it is the occasion of a great many errors in principle; their understanding is clouded, and conscience debauched by it; and therefore to support themselves in it they espouse corrupt notions, and form their minds in favour of their lusts. Probably some were drawn in to worship idols by their love of the wine and strong drink, which there was plenty of at their idolatrous

festivals, and so they erred through wine, as Israel for love of the daughters of Moab joined themselves to Baal-peor.

Three things are here observed as aggravations of this sin:

1. That those were guilty of it whose business it was to warn others against it, and to teach them better things, and therefore who ought to have set a better example. The priest and the prophet are swallowed up with wine, their office is quite drowned and lost in it. The priests as sacrifices were obliged by a particular law to be temperate, *Lev. x. 9.* and as rulers and magistrates it was not for them to drink wine, *Prov. xxxi. 4.* The prophets were a kind of Nazarites, as appears by *Amos ii. 11.* and as reprovers by office were concerned to keep at the utmost distance from the sins they reprov'd in others; yet these were many of them ensnared in this sin. What? a priest, a prophet, a minister, and yet drunk? Tell it not in Gath. Such a scandal are they to their coat.

2. That the consequences of it were very pernicious, not only by the ill influence of their example; but the prophet when he was drunk erred in vision; the false prophets plainly discovered themselves to be so when they were in drink; The priest stumbled in judgment, forgot the law, *Prov. xxxi. 5.* he reeled and staggered as much in the operations of his mind, as in the motion of his body. What wisdom or justice can be expected from those that sacrifice reason, and virtue, and conscience, and all that is valuable, to such a base lust as the love of strong drink is? Happy art thou, O land, when thy princes eat and drink for strength, and not for drunkenness, *Eccles. x. 17.*

3. That the disease was epidemical, and the generality of those that kept any thing of a table were infected with it; All tables are full of vomit, *ver. 9.* See what an odious sin the sin of drunkenness is, what an affront it is to human society, it is rude and ill-mannered, enough to turn men's stomachs; for the tables where they eat their meat, are filthily stained with the marks of this sin, which the sinners declare as Solomon, their tables are full of vomit. So that the victor, instead of being proud of his crown, ought rather to be ashamed of it. It bodes ill to any people when so filthy a sin as drunkenness, is become national.

9. ¶ Whom shall he teach knowledge; and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts. 10. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line: here a little and there a little: 11. For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. 12. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear. 13. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

The prophet here complains of the wretched stupidity of this people, that they were unteachable, and made no improvement of the means of grace which they enjoyed; they still continued as they were, their mistakes not rectified, their hearts not renewed, nor their lives reformed. Observe,

1. What it was that their prophets and ministers designed and aimed at: it was to teach them knowledge, the knowledge of God and his will, and to make them understand doctrine, *ver. 9.* This is God's way of dealing with man, to enlighten men's minds, first with the knowledge of his truth, and by that means to gain their affections, and bring their wills into a compliance with his laws; thus he enters in by the door, whereas the thief and robber climbs up another way.

2. What method they took in pursuance of this design: they left no means untried to do them good, but taught them as children are taught, little children that are beginning to learn, that are taken from the breast to the book, *ver. 9.* for among the Jews it was common for mothers to nurse their children till they were three years old, and almost ready to go to school. And it is good to begin betimes with children, to teach them as they are capable the good knowledge of the Lord, and to instruct them, even when they are but newly weaned from the milk.

The prophets taught them as children are taught, for,

(1.) They were constant and industrious in teaching them; they took great pains with them, and with great prudence, teaching them as they needed it, and were able to bear it, *ver. 10.* Precept upon precept: It must be so; as some read it, it has been so: They have been taught as children are taught to read by precept upon precept, and taught to write by line upon line; a little here and a little there, a little of one thing, and a little of another; that the variety of instructions might be pleasing and inviting: a little at one time, and a little at another, that they might not have their memories overcharged; a little from one prophet and a little from another, that every one might be pleased with his friend, and him be admired. Note, For our instruction in the things of God, it is requisite that we have precept upon precept, and line upon line; that one precept and line should be followed, and so enforced by another; the precept of justice must be upon the precept of piety, and the precept of charity upon that of justice: Nay, we have need that the same precept and the same line should be often repeated and inculcated upon us; that we may the better understand them and the easier recollect them when we have occasion for them. Teachers should accommodate themselves to the capacity of the learners, give them what they most need and can best bear, and a little at a time, *Deut. vi. 6, 7.*

(2.) They courted them and spoke them fair, *ver. 12.* God by his prophets said to them, this way that we are directing you to, and directing you in, it is the rest, the only rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest, and this will be the refreshing of your own souls, and will bring rest to your country from the wars and other calamities with which it has been long harassed. Note, God by his word calls us to nothing but what is really for our own advantage; for the service of God is the only true rest for those that are weary of the service of sin, and there is no refreshing but under the easy yoke of the Lord Jesus.

3. What little effect all this had upon the people; they were as unfit to learn as young children newly weaned from the milk, and it was as impossible to satiate any thing upon them, *ver. 9.* nay, one would choose rather to teach a child of two years old, than undertake to teach them: for they have not only (like such a child) no capacity to receive what is taught them, but they are prejudiced against it. As children they have need of milk, and cannot bear strong meat, *Ileb. v. 12.* (1.) They would not hear, *ver. 12.* no, not that which would be rest and refreshing to them; they had no mind to hear it; the word of God commanded their serious attention, but could not gain it; they were where it was preached, but they turned a deaf ear to

to it, or as it came in at one ear it went out at the other. (2.) They would not heed; it was unto them *precept upon precept, and line upon line*, ver. 13. *i. e.* they went on in a road of external performances, they kept up the old custom of attending upon the prophet's preaching and it was continually sounding in their ears; but that was all, it made no impression upon them: They had the letter of the precept, but no experience of the power and spirit of it; it was continually beating upon them, but it beat nothing into them. Nay, (3.) It should seem they ridiculed the prophet's preaching and bantered it; the word of the Lord was unto them (*Tsau latsau, kau lakau*) in the original it is in rhyme, they made a song of the prophet's words, and sung it when they were merry over their wine, David was the song of the drunkards. It is great impiety, and a high affront to God, thus to make a jest of sacred things; to speak of that vainly which should make us serious.

4. How severely God would reckon with them for this:

1. He would deprive them of the privilege of plain preaching, and speak to them *with stammering lips and another tongue*, ver. 11. They that will not understand what is plain and level to their capacity, but despise it as mean and trifling, are justly amused with that which is above them. Or God will send foreign armies among them, whose language they understand not, to lay their country waste. Those that will not hear the comfortable voice of God's word, shall be made to hear the dreadful voice of his rod. Or, these words may be taken as speaking God's gracious condescension to their capacity in his dealing with them; he listened to them in their own language, as nurses do their children with stammering lips to humour them; he changed his voice, tried first one way and then another; the apostle quotes it as a favour. 1 Cor. xiv. 21. applying it to the gift of tongues, and complaining that yet for all this they would not hear.

2. He would bring utter ruin upon them; by their profane contempt of God and his word they are but hastening on their own ruin, and ripening themselves for it; it is that *they may go and fall backward*, may grow worse and worse, may depart farther and farther from God, and proceed from one sin to another, till they be quite broken, and snared, and taken, and ruined, ver. 13. They have here a little and there a little of the word of God, they think it too much, and *say to the seers, See not*: but it proves too little to convert them, and will prove enough to condemn them: If it be not a *favour of life unto life*, it will be a *favour of death unto death*.

14. ¶ Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. 15. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: 16. ¶ Therefore thus said the Lord GOD, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. 17. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. 18. ¶ And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. 19. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. 20. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. 21. For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perizim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibbon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. 22. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.

The prophet having reproved those that made a jest of the word of God here goes on to reprove those that made a jest of the judgments of God, and set them at defiance: for he is a jealous God, and will not suffer either his ordinances or his providences to be brought into contempt: He addressed himself to the *scornful men that ruled in Jerusalem*, who were the magistrates of the city, ver. 14. It is bad with a people when their thrones of judgment become the seats of the scornful, when rulers are scorned; but that the rulers of Jerusalem should be men of such a character is very sad; that they should make light of God's judgments, and scorn to take notice of the tokens of his displeasure: who will be mourners in Zion if they are scorned.

Observe, 1. How these scornful men lulled themselves asleep in carnal security, and even challenged God Almighty to do his worst, ver. 15. *Ye have said, We have made a covenant with death and the grave*: They thought themselves as sure of their lives, even then when the most destroying judgments were abroad, as if they had made a bargain with death upon a valuable consideration, not to come till they sent for him: or not to take them away by any violence, but by old age. If we be at peace with God, and have made a covenant with him, we have in effect made a covenant with death, that it shall come in the fittest time, that whenever it comes it shall be no terror to us, nor do us any real damage; death is ours, if we be Christ's, 1 Cor. iii. 22. but to think of making death our friend, or being in league with it, while by sin we are making God our enemy and are at war with him, is the greatest absurdity that can be. It was a fond conceit which these scornful men had, *When the overflowing scourge shall pass through our country, and others fall under it, yet it shall not come to us, nor reach us though it extend far; nor bear us down, though it is an overflowing scourge*. It is the greatest folly imaginable for impatient sinners to think, that either in this world or the other they shall fare better than their neighbours. But what is the ground of their confidence? Why truly *we have made lies our refuge*; either, (1.) Those things which the prophets told them would be lies and falsehood to them, and would deceive; but which they themselves looked upon as substantial fences; The protection of their idols, the pro-

phesies which their false prophets footed them up with, their policy, their wealth, their interest in the people; these they confided in, and not in God: nay, these they confided in against God: Or, (2.) Those things which should be lies and falsehood to the enemy, who was *flagellum Dei*, the overflowing scourge; they would secure themselves by imposing upon the enemy with their stratagems of war, or their feigned submissions in treaties of peace: The rest of the cities of Judah were taken because they made an obstinate defence: but the rulers of Jerusalem hope to play their cards better, they think themselves greater politicians than those of the country towns; they will compliment the king of Assyria with a promise to surrender their city, or to become tributaries to him, with a purpose at the same time to shake off his yoke as soon as the danger is over, not caring though they be found liars to him, as the expression is, *Deut. xxxiii. 29*. Note, Those put a cheat upon themselves that think to gain their point by putting cheats upon those they deal with. Those that pursue their designs by trick and fraud, by mean and paltry shifts, may perhaps compass them, but cannot expect comfort in them: Honesty is the best policy: but such refugees as these they are driven to that depart from God, and throw themselves out of his protection.

2. How God by the prophet awakens them out of this sleep, and shows them the folly of their security.

1. He tells them upon what grounds they might be secure; he doth not disturb their false confidences, till he hath first shewed them a firm bottom on which they may repose themselves, ver. 16. *Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone*; This foundation is, (1.) The promises of God in general; his word, upon which he hath caused his people to hope; his covenant with Abraham, that he would be a God to him and his; this is a foundation, a foundation of stone, firm and lasting, for faith to build upon; it is a tried stone, for all the saints have stayed themselves upon it, and it never failed them. (2.) The promise of Christ in particular; for to him this is expressly applied in the New Testament, 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7, 8. He is that stone which is become the head of the corner. The great promise of the Messiah and his kingdom, which was to begin at Jerusalem was sufficient to make God's people easy in the worst of times: for they knew very well, that till he was come the sceptre should not depart from Judah. Zion shall continue while this foundation is yet to be laid there. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, for the comfort of those that dare not make lies their refuge, behold and look upon me, as one that hath undertaken to lay in Zion a stone. Jesus Christ is a foundation of God's laying: *This is the Lord's doing*; He is laid in Zion, in the church, is the holy hill: He is a tried stone, a trying stone, so some; a touch-stone, that shall distinguish betwixt true and counterfeit: He is a precious stone, for such are the foundations of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 19. a corner stone, in whom the sides of the building are united; the head stone of the corner: And he that believeth these promises and rests upon them, shall not make haste, shall not run to and fro in a hurry as men at their wit's end, shall not be shifting here and there for his own safety, nor be driven to his feet by any terrors, as the wicked man is said to be, *Job. xviii. 11*. but with a fixed heart shall quietly wait the event, saying, Welcome the will of God: *He shall not make haste in his expectations*, so as to anticipate the time set in the divine counsels, but though it tarry, will wait the appointed hour, knowing that he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry: He that believes will not make more haste than good speed; but be satisfied that God's time is the best time, and with patience wait for it. The apostles from the LXX. explain this, 1 Pet. ii. 6. *He that believes on him shall not be confounded*; his expectations shall not be frustrated, but far outdone.

2. He tells them that upon these grounds which they now built on, they could not be safe, but their confidences would certainly fail them, ver. 17. *Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet*: This speaks, (1.) The building up of his church; having laid the foundation, ver. 16. he will raise the structure, as builders do, by line and plummet, *Eccl. v. 10*. Righteousness shall be the line, and judgment the plummet; *i. e.* The church being founded on Christ, shall be formed and reformed by the scripture, the standing rule of judgment and righteousness: *Judgment shall return unto righteousness*, Psal. xciv. 15. Or, (2.) The punishing of the enemies of it, against them, he will proceed in strict justice according to the threatenings of the law; he will give them their deserts, and bring upon them the judgments they have challenged; but in wisdom too, and by an exact rule, that the tares may not be plucked up with the wheat; And when God comes thus to execute judgment,

(1.) These scornful men will be made ashamed of their vain hopes with which they had deluded themselves:

1. They designed to make lies their refuge, but it will indeed prove a refuge of lies, which *the hail shall sweep away*, that tempest of hail spoken of, ver. 2. They that make lies their refuge, build upon the sand, and the building will fall when the storm comes, and bury the builder in the ruins of it: And they that make any thing their hiding-place, but Christ, the waters shall overflow it, as every shelter but the ark was over-topped and overthrown by the waters of the deluge. Such is the hope of the hypocrite, this will come of all his confidences.

2. They boasted of a covenant with death, and an agreement with the grave; but it shall be disannulled, as made without his consent that has the keys and sovereign command of hell and death. Those do but delude themselves that think by any wiles to evade the judgments of God.

3. They fancied that when the overflowing scourge should pass through the land, it should not come near them; but the prophet tells them that then, when others were fallen by the common calamity, they should not only share in it, but should be trodden down by it; ye shall be to it for a treading down, it shall triumph over you as much as over any other, and you shall become its easy prey.

They are farther told, ver. 19. (1.) That it shall begin with them; they shall be so far from escaping it that they shall be the first that shall fall by it, *from the time it goes forth it shall take you* as if it came on purpose to seize you. (2.) That it shall pursue them close, *morning by morning shall it pass over*, as duly as the day returns, you shall hear of some desolation or other made by it; for divine justice will follow its blow: you shall never be safe or easy by day or by night; there shall be a pestilence walking in darkness, and a destruction waiting at noon-day. (3.) That there shall be no avoiding it; the understanding of the report of its approach shall not give you any opportunity to make your escape, for there shall be no way of escape open; but it shall be only a vexation, you shall see it coming and not see how to help yourselves: or the very report of it at a distance will be a terror to you, what then will the thing itself be; evil tidings are a terror and a vexation to scornful men, but he whose heart is fixed, *trusting in God, is not afraid of them*; and when the overflowing scourge comes, then all their comforts, and confidences fail them, ver. 20. (1.) That in which they thought to repose themselves reacheth not to the length of their expectations; *the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it*, so that he is forced to cram and contract himself. (2.) That in which they thought to shelter themselves, proves insufficient to answer the intention; *the covering is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it*. Those that do not build upon

Christ, as their foundation, but rest on a righteousness of their own, will prove in the end thus to have deceived themselves; they can never be easy, safe, or warm; the bed is too short, the covering is too narrow, like our first parents' fig-leaves, the shame of their nakedness will still appear.

(2.) God will be glorified in the accomplishment of his counsel, *ver. 21*. When God comes to contend with these scorners, (1.) He will do his worst, and bring to pass his act, he will work for his own honour and glory, according to his own purpose; the work shall appear to all that see it to be the work of God as the righteous judge of the earth. (2.) He will do it now against his people, as formerly he did it against their enemies; by which his justice will appear to be impartial, he will now *rise up against Jerusalem*, as in David's time against the Philistines in mount Perazim, *2 Sam. v. 20*. and as in Joshua's time against the Canaanites in the valley of Gibeon. If those that profess themselves members of God's church, by their pride and scornfulness make themselves like Philistines and Canaanites, they must expect to be dealt with as such. (3.) This will be his strange work, his strange act, his foreign deed; it is work that he is backward to, he rather delights in shewing mercy, and doth not afflict willingly; it is work that he is not used to, as to his own people he used to protect and favour them, it is a strange work indeed, if he *turn to be their enemy and fight against them*, *Isa. lxiii. 10*. it is a work that all the neighbours will stand amazed at, *Deut. xxix. 24*. and therefore the ruins of Jerusalem are said to be an *astonishment*, *Jer. xxv. 18*.

Lastly, Here is the use and application of all this, *ver. 22*. *Therefore be ye not mockers*, dare not to ridicule either the reproofs of God's word, or the approaches of his judgments: *mocking the messengers of the Lord* was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin. The consideration of the judgments of God that are coming upon hypocritical professors should effectually silence mockers, and make them serious; *Be ye not mockers lest your hands be made strong*; both the bands by which you are bound under the dominion of sin, for there is little hopes of the conversion of mockers) and the bands by which you are bound over to the judgment of God; God hath bands of justice strong enough to hold those that break all the bonds of his law in sunder, and cast away all his cords from them. Let not these mockers make light of divine threatenings, for the prophet (who is one of those with whom the secret of the Lord is) assures them that the Lord God of hosts hath in his hearing determined a *consumption upon the whole earth*, and can they think to escape? or shall their unbelief invalidate the threatening?

23. ¶ Give ye ear and hear my voice; hearken and hear my speech. 24. Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? 25. When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye in their place? 26. For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. 27. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing-instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. 28. Bread-corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. 29. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

This parable, which (as many of our Saviour's parables) is borrowed from the husbandman's calling, is ushered in with a solemn preface demanding attention. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*, hear and understand, *ver. 23*.

1. The parable here is plain enough, that the husbandman applies himself to the business of his calling with a great deal of pains and prudence; that he goes by rule in it, and *secundum artem*, and as his judgment directs him observes a method and order in his work. (1.) In his ploughing and sowing? *Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?* Yes he doth, and he *ploughs in hope*, and *sows in hope*, *1 Cor. ix. 10*. Doth he hurl it, and *break the clods*? Yes, he doth, that it may be fit to receive the seed. And when he has thus made plain the face thereof, doth he not sow his seed, seed suitable to the soil, for the husbandman knows what grain is fit for clay ground, and what for sandy ground, and accordingly he sows each in their place; *Wheat in the principal place*, so the margin reads it, for it is the principal grain, and was the staple commodity of Canaan, *Ezek. xxvii. 17*, and *barley in the appointed place*. The wisdom and the goodness of the God of nature is to be observed in this, and this to oblige his creatures with a grateful variety of products he hath suited to them an agreeable variety of earths. (2.) In his threshing, *ver. 27, 28*. This also he proportions to the grain that is to be threshed out; the fitches and the cummin being easily got out of their husk or ear, are only threshed with a staff and a rod; but the bread-corn requires more force, and therefore that must be bruised with a threshing instrument, a sledge shod with iron, that was drawn to and fro over it, to beat out the corn; and yet he will not be ever threshing it, nor any longer than is necessary to loosen the corn from the chaff; he will not break it or crush it into the ground with the *wheel of his cart*, nor bruise it to pieces with his horsemen; the grinding of it is reserved for another operation. Observe, by the way, what pains is to be taken not only for the carrying but for the preparing of our necessary food; and yet after all it is *meat that perisheth*; shall we then grudge to labour much more for the *meat which endures for everlasting life*? Bread-corn is bruised, Christ was so; it *pleaseth the Lord to bruise him*, that he might be the bread of life to us.

2. The reddition of the parable is not so plain: most interpreters make it a farther answer to those who set the judgments of God at defiance: let them know that as the husbandman will not always be ploughing, but will at length sow his seed; so God will not always be threatening, but will at length execute his threatenings and bring upon sinners the judgments they have deserved; but in wisdom, and in proportion to their strength, not that they may be ruined but reformed, and brought to repentance by them. But I think we may give this parable a greater latitude in the exposition of it.

1. In general; that God who gives the husbandman this wisdom, no doubt himself is infinitely wise. It is God that *instructs the husbandman to discretion as his God*, *ver. 26*. Husbandmen have need of discretion, whereby to order their affairs, and ought not to undertake that business unless they do in some measure understand it; and they should by observation and experience endeavour to improve themselves in the knowledge of it. Since

the king himself is served of the field, the advancing of the art of husbandry is a common service to mankind, more than the cultivating of most other arts: The skill of the husbandman is from God, as every good and perfect gift is. This takes off something of the weight and terror of the sentence passed on man for sin, that when God in execution of it sent man to till the ground, he taught him how to do it most to his advantage, else in the greatness of his folly, he might have been for ever tilling the sand of the sea, i.e. labouring to no purpose: it is he that gives men capacity for this business, and an inclination to it, and a delight in it; and if some were not by providence cut out for it, and made to rejoice as Isaac, that tribe of husbandmen in their tents, notwithstanding the toil and fatigue of this business, we should soon want the supports of life. If some are more discreet and judicious in managing these or any other affairs than others are, God must be acknowledged in it; and to him husbandmen must seek for direction in their business: for they above other men have an immediate dependence upon the divine providence. As to the other instance of the husbandman's conduct in threshing his corn; it is said, *This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts*, *ver. 29*. Even the plainest dictates of sense and reason must be acknowledged to come forth from the Lord of hosts; and if it is from him that men do things wisely and discreetly, we must needs acknowledge him to be wise in counsel and excellent in working. God's working is according to his will, he never acts against his own mind, as men often do, and there is counsel in his whole will; he is therefore excellent in working, because he is wonderful in counsel.

2. God's church is his husbandry, *1 Cor. iii. 9*. If Christ is the true vine, his father is the husbandman, *John xvi. 1*. and he is continually by his word and ordinance cultivating it: *Doth the ploughman plough all day, and break the clods of his ground* that it may receive the seed, and doth not God by his ministers break up the fallow ground? Doth not the ploughman, when the ground is fitted for the seed, cast in the seed in its proper soil? he doth so, and so the great God sows his word by the hand of his ministers, *Mat. xiii. 19*. who are to divide the word of truth, and give every one their portion. Whatever the soil of the heart is, there is some seed or other in the word proper for it: and as the word of God, so the rod of God is thus wisely made use of. Afflictions are God's threshing instruments, designed to loosen us from the world, to part between us and our chaff, and to prepare us for use. And as to these, God will make use of them as there is occasion; but he will proportion them to our strength, they shall be no heavier than there is need: if the rod and the staff will answer the end, he will not make use of his cart-wheel and his horsemen, and where these are necessary, as for the bruising of the bread-corn (which will not otherwise be got clean from the straw) yet he will not be ever threshing it, will not always chide, but his anger shall endure but for a moment; nor will he crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth. And herein we must acknowledge him *wonderful in counsel and excellent in working*.

C H A P. XXIX.

This woe to Ariel which we have in this chapter is the same with the burden of the valley of vision, *chap. xxii. 1*. and (it is very probable) points at the same event, the besieging of Jerusalem by the Assyrian army, which was cut off there by an angel; yet applicable to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and the last desolations by the Romans. Here is (1.) The event itself foretold that Jerusalem should be greatly distressed, *ver. 1—4—6*. But that their enemies that distressed them should be baffled and defeated, *ver. 5—7, 8*. (2.) A reproof to three sorts of sinners. (1.) Those that were stupid and regardless of the warnings which the prophet gave them *ver. 9—12*. (2.) Those that were formal and hypocritical in their religious performances, *ver. 13, 14*. (3.) Those politicians that atheistically and profanely despised God's providences, and set up their own projects in competition with it, *ver. 15, 16, 17*. (3.) Precious promises of grace and mercy to a distinguishing remnant whom God would sanctify, and in whom he would be sanctified, when their enemies and persecutors should be cut off, *ver. 18—24*.

1. **W**OE to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt; add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. 2. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. 3. And will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. 4. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as of one, that hath a familiar spirit out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust. 5. Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant, suddenly. 6. Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. 7. ¶ And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her, and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. 8. It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against mount Zion.

That it is Jerusalem that is here called Ariel is agreed, for that was the city where David dwelt; that part of it which was called Zion, was in a particular manner the city of David, in which both the temple and the palace were: but why it is so called is very uncertain: it is likely the name and the reason was then very well known. Cities as well as persons get surnames and nicknames. Ariel signifies the lion of God, or the strong lion: as the lion is king among the beasts, so was Jerusalem among the cities, giving law to all about her; it was the city of the great king, *Palm xlviii. 1, 2*. it was the head city of Judah, who is called a lion's whelp, *Gen. xlix. 9*. and

and whose ensign was a lion: and he that is the lion of the tribe of Judah was the glory of it. Jerusalem was a terror sometimes to the neighbouring nations, and while she was a righteous city was held as a lion. Some make Ariel to signify the altar of burnt-offerings, which devoured the beasts offered in sacrifice as the lion doth his prey. Woe to that altar in the city where David dwelt; that was destroyed with the temple by the Chaldeans. I rather take it as woe to Jerusalem, Jerusalem, it is repeated here as it is, *Mat. xxiii. 37.* that it might be the more awakening. Here is,

1. The distress of Jerusalem foretold; though Jerusalem be a strong city as a lion, though a holy city as the lion of God; yet if iniquity be found there, woe be to it; it was *the city where David dwelt*, it was he that brought that to it which was its glory, and which made it the type of the gospel-church; and his dwelling in it was typical of Christ's residence in his church. This is mentioned as an aggravation of Jerusalem's sin, that in it was set forth the testimony of Israel, and *the throne of the house of David*.

1. Let Jerusalem know that her external performance of religious services will not serve as an exemption from the judgments of God. *ver. 1. Add ye year to year; go on in the road of your annual feasts, let all your males appear there three times a year before the Lord, and none empty, according to the law and custom, and let them never miss any of these solemnities: let them kill the sacrifices, as they used to do, but as long as their lives are unreformed and their hearts unhumbled, let them not think thus to pacify an offended God and to turn away his wrath.* Note, Hypocrites may be found in a constant track of devout exercises, and treading around in them, and with these they may flatter themselves, but can never please God, or make their peace with him.

2. Let her know that God is coming forth against them in displeasure, that she shall be *visited of the Lord of hosts*, *ver. 6. i. e.* her sins shall be inquired into and punished; God will reckon for them with terrible judgments, with the frightful alarms and rueful desolations of war, which shall be like thunder and earthquakes, storms and tempests, and devouring fire, especially upon account of the great noise. When a foreign enemy was not in the borders but the howls of the country, roaring, and ravaging, and laying all waste, especially such an army as that of the Assyrians, whose commanders being so very insolent, as appears by the carriage of Rabshakeh, the common soldiers no doubt were much more rude; they might fear the Lord of these hosts inviting them with thunder and storm. Yet this being here said to be a great noise, perhaps it is intimated that they shall be worse frightened than hurt. Particularly,

1. Jerusalem shall be besieged: straitly besieged: he doth not say, *I will destroy Ariel*, but *I will distress Ariel*; and she is therefore brought into distress, that being thereby awakened to repent and reform, she may not be brought to destruction, *ver. 3. I will camp against thee round about.* It was the enemy's army that encamped against it; but God saith he will do it, for they are his hand, he doth it by them. God hath often and long by an host of angels, encamped for them round about them, for their protection and deliverance; but now he was turned to be their enemy and fought against them. The siege laid against them was of his laying, and the forts raised against them were of his raising. Note, When men fight against us, we must in them see God contending with us.

2. She shall be in grief to see the country laid waste, and all the fenced cities of Judah in the enemy's hand; *there shall be heaviness and sorrow*, *ver. 2 mourning and lamentation*; so these two words are sometimes rendered. Those that are most merry and jovial, when they come to be in distress are commonly most overwhelmed with heaviness and sorrow; their laughter is then turned into mourning. All Jerusalem shall then be unto me as Ariel, as the altar, with fire upon it and slain about it: so it was when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; and many, no doubt, were slain when it was besieged by the Assyrians. The whole city shall be an altar, in which sinners falling by the judgments that are abroad, shall be as victims to divine justice. Or thus; *there shall be heaviness and sorrow*; they shall repent, and reform, and return to God, and then it shall be to me as Ariel; Jerusalem shall be like itself, shall become to me a Jerusalem again, a holy city, *Isa. i. 26.*

3. She shall be humbled, and mortified, and made submissive, *ver. 4. Thou shalt be brought down from the height of arrogance and insolence to which thou art come; the proud looks and the proud language shall be brought down by one humbling providence after another.* Those that despise God's judgments shall be humbled by them, for the proudest sinner shall either bend or break before him. They had talked big, had *lifted up the horn on high*, and had *spoken with a stiff neck*, *Psal. lxxv. 5.* but now thou shalt *speak out of the ground, out of the dust*; as one that has a familiar spirit, *whispering out of the dust*. This intimates that they should be faint and feeble, not able to speak up, nor to say all they would say; but as those who are sick, or whose spirits are ready to fail, their speech shall be low and interrupted, and that they should be fearful and in consternation; forced to speak low, as being afraid lest their enemies should over-hear them and take advantage against them; and that they should be tamed and obliged to submit to the conquerors. When Hezekiah submitted to the king of Assyria, saying, *I have offended, that which thou puttest on me I will bear*, *2 Kings xviii. 14.* then his speech was low out of the dust. God can make those to speak that have been most daring, and quite dispirit them.

2. The destruction of Jerusalem's enemies is foretold, for the comfort of all that were her friends and well-wishers in this distress, *ver. 5—7. Thou shalt be brought down (ver. 4.) to speak out of the dust*; so low thou shalt be reduced. But (so it may be rendered) *the multitude of thy strangers and thy terrible ones*; the numerous armies of the enemy shall themselves be like small dust, not able to speak at all, or so much as whisper, but *as chaff that passeth away*. Thou shalt be abased, but they shall be quite dispersed, smitten and slain after another manner, *chap. xxvii. 1.* They shall pass away, yea it shall be at an instant, suddenly; the enemy shall be surprised with the destruction and you with the salvation. The army of the Assyrians was by an angel laid dead upon the spot, in an instant, suddenly. Such will be the destruction of the enemies of the gospel of Jerusalem, *in one hour is their judgment come*, *Rev. xviii. 13.* Again, *ver. 6. Thou shalt be visited*; or, as it is used to be rendered, *She shall be visited with thunder and a great noise*; Thou shalt be put into a fright which thou shalt soon recover. But (*ver. 7.*) the multitude of the nations that fight against her, shall be *as a dream of a night vision*; they and their prosperity and success shall soon vanish past recall; *The multitude of the nations that fight against Zion shall be as a hungry man that dreams he eats, but still is hungry.* That is, (1.) Whereas they hoped to make a prey of Jerusalem, and to enrich themselves with the plunder of that opulent city, their hopes shall prove vain dreams, with which their fancies may please and sport themselves for a while, but they shall be disappointed. They fancied themselves masters of Jerusalem, but shall never be so. (2.) They themselves, and all their pomp, and power, and prosperity, shall vanish like a dream when one awakes; shall be of as little value and as short continuance, *Psal. lxxiii. 20.* He shall *fly away as a dream*, *Job xx. 8.* The army of Sennacherib vanished and was gone presently, though it had filled the country as a dream fills a man's head; especially as a dream of meats fill the head of him that went to bed hungry.

Many understand these verses as part of the threatening of wrath, when God come to distress Jerusalem and lay siege to her: (1.) The multitude

of her friends, whom she relies upon for help, shall do her no good; for though they are terrible ones, they shall be like the small dust, and shall pass away. (2.) The multitude of her enemies shall never think they can do her mischief enough; but when they have devoured her much, still they shall be but like a man that dreams he eats, hungry and greedy to devour her more.

9. ¶ Stay yourselves and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine: they stagger, but not with strong drink. 10. For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. 11. And the vision of all is become unto you, as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed; 12. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. 13. ¶ Wherefore the LORD saith, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but hath removed their heart far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men. 14. Therefore, behold I will proceed to do a marvellous work amongst this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. 15. Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? 16. Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

Here, 1. The prophet stands amazed at the stupidity of the greatest part of the Jewish nation. They had Levites who taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and had encouragement from Hezekiah in doing so, *2 Chron. xxx. 22.* They had prophets who brought them messages immediately from God, and signified to them what were the causes, and what should be the effect of God's displeasure against them. Now one would think, surely this great nation, that has all the advantages of divine revelation, is a wise and understanding people, *Deut. iv. 6.* But alas! it was quite otherwise, *ver. 9.* The prophet directs himself to the sober, thinking part of them, calling upon them to be affected with the general carelessness of their neighbours. It may be read, they delay, they put off their repentance, but wonder ye that they should be so sottish, they sport themselves with their own deceivings, they riot and revel; but do ye cry out, lament their folly, cry to God by prayer for them. The more senseless they are of the hand of God gone out against them, the more do you lay hear to these things. Note, The security of sinners in their sinful ways, is just matter of lamentation and wonder to all serious people, who should think themselves concerned to pray for those that do not pray for themselves. But what is the matter? What are we thus to wonder at?

1. We may well wonder that the generality of the people is so sottish, and brutish, and so insatuated, as if they were intoxicated; *They are drunken, but not with wine*; not with wine only, otherwise with that they were often drunk, and they *erred through wine*, *chap. xxviii. 7.* They were drunk with the love of pleasures, with prejudices against religion, and with the corrupt principles they had imbibed: like drunken men they know not what they do or say, or whither they go. They are not sensible of the divine rebukes they are under; *they have beaten me, and I felt it not*, saith the drunkard, *Prov. xxiii. 35.* God speaks to them once, yea twice; but like men drunk, they perceive it not, they understand it not, but forget the law. They stagger in their counsels, are unable and unsteady, and stumble at every thing that lies in their way. There is such a thing as spiritual drunkenness.

2. It is yet more strange that God himself hath poured out upon them a spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed their eyes, *ver. 10.* that he who bids them awake and open their eyes, should yet lay them to sleep and shut their eyes: but it is in a way of a righteous judgment, to punish them for their *loving darkness rather than light*, their loving sleep. When God by his prophets called them, they said, *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber*, and therefore he gave them up to strong delusions, and said, *Sleep on now.* This is applied to the unbelieving Jews, that rejected the gospel of Christ, and were justly hardened in their infidelity, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost, *Rom. xi. 8. God hath given them in spirit of slumber.* And we have reason to fear it is the woeful case of many who live in the midst of gospel-light.

3. It is very sad that this should be the case of those that were their prophets, and rulers, and seers; that they who should be their guides, are themselves blindfolded; and it is easy to tell what the fatal consequences will be when the blind lead the blind. This was fulfilled when in the latter days of the Jewish church, the chief-priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people were the great opposers of Christ and his gospel, and brought themselves under a judicial insatiation.

4. The sad effect of this was, that all the means of conviction, knowledge and grace, which they enjoyed, were ineffectual, and did not answer the end, *ver. 11, 12. The vision of all the prophets, true and false, is become to you as the words of a book, or letter that is sealed up*; you cannot discern the truth of the real visions, and the falsehood of the pretended ones. Or every vision particularly that this prophet had seen for them and published to them was become unintelligible; they had it among them, but were never the wiser for it, no more than a man (though scholar good enough) is for a book delivered to him sealed up, and which he must not open the seals of. He sees it is a book, and that is all, he knows nothing of what is in it; so they knew what Isaiah saw was a vision and prophecy, but the meaning of it was hid from them; it was only a sound of words to them, which they were not at all alarmed by or affected with; it answered not the intention, for it made no impression at all upon them. Neither the learned nor the unlearned were the better for all the messages God sent them by his servants the prophets, nor desired to be so. The ordinary sort of people excused themselves from regarding what the prophets said, with their want of learning and a liberal education, as if they were not concerned to know

know and do the will of God, because they were not bred scholars; *It is nothing to me, I am not learned.* Those of better rank pretended that the prophet had a way of speaking by himself, which was obscure to them; and what, though they were men of letters, they had not been used to; and, *Si non vis intelligi debes negligi.* Both these are groundless pretences; for God's prophets have been no unfaithful debtors either to the wife or to the unwife, Rom. i. 14. Or we may take it thus: the book of prophecy was given to them sealed; so that they could not read it, as a just judgment upon them: because it had often been delivered to them unsealed, and they would not take pains to learn the language of it, and then made excuse for their not reading it, because they were not learned. But observe the vision is become thus to you, whose minds the God of this world hath blinded; but it is not so in itself, it is not so at all; the same vision which to you is a *favour of death unto death*, to others is and shall be a *favour of life unto life.* Knowledge is easy to him that understandeth.

2. The prophet in God's name threatens those that were formal and hypocritical in the exercises of devotion, ver. 13, 14. Observe here,

(1.) The sin that is here charged upon them: dissembling with God in their religious performances, ver. 13. He that knows the heart, and cannot be imposed upon with shews and pretences charged it upon them, whether their hearts condemn them for it, or no; he that is greater than the heart, and knows all things, knows that though they *draw nigh to him with their mouth*, and *honour him with their lips*, yet they are not sincere in it. To worship God is to make our approaches to him, and to present our adorations of him; it is to draw nigh to him, as those that have business with him, with an intention therein to honour him. This we are to do with our mouth and with our lips, in speaking of him, and in speaking to him; we must *render to him the calves of our lips*, Hosea xiv. 2. And if the heart be full of his love and fear, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak. But there are many whose religion is lip-labour only. They say that which expresseth an approach to God and an adoration of him, but it is only from the teeth outward: For, (1.) They do not apply their minds to the service; when they pretend to be speaking to God, they are thinking of a thousand impertinences; they have removed their hearts far from me, that they might not be employed in prayer, nor come within reach of the word. When work was to be done for God which required the heart, that was sent out of the way on purpose, with the fool's eyes into the ends of the earth. (2.) They do not make the word of God the rule of their worship, nor his will their reason; *their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men.* They worshipped the God of Israel not according to his appointment, but their own inventions; the direction of their false prophets, or their idolatrous kings, or the usages of the nations that were round about them: the tradition of the elders was of more value and validity with them than the laws which God commanded Moses. Or if they did worship God in a way conformable to his institution in the days of Hezekiah, a great reformer, they had more an eye to the precept of the king than to God's command. This our Saviour applies to the Jews in his time, who were formal in their devotions, and wedded to their own inventions, and pronounce concerning them, that in vain they did worship God, Matt. xv. 8, 9.

(2.) It is a spiritual judgment with which God threatens to punish them for their spiritual wickedness, ver. 14. *I will add to do a marvellous work.* They did one strange thing, they removed all sincerity from their hearts: now God will go on and do another, he will remove all sagacity from their heads; *the wisdom of their wise men shall perish.* They played the hypocrite, and thought to put a cheat upon God, and now they are left to themselves to play the fool; and not only to put a cheat upon themselves, but to be easily cheated by all about them. Those that make religion no more but a pretence to serve a turn, are out in their politics; and those that part with their uprightness; it is just with God to deprive them of their understanding. This was fulfilled in the wretched insatiation which the Jewish nation was manifestly under after they had rejected the gospel of Christ: they removed their hearts far from God, and therefore God justly removed wisdom far from them, and hid from their eyes the things that belonged even to their temporal peace. This is a marvellous work; it is surprising, it is astonishing, that wise men should of a sudden lose their wisdom, and be given up to strong delusions. Judgments on the mind, though least taken notice of, are to be most admired.

3. He shews the folly of those that thought to act separately and secretly from God, and were carrying on designs independent upon God, and which they projected to conceal from his all-seeing eye.

Here is, (1.) Their politics described, ver. 15. They *seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord*, that he may not know either what they do, or what they design; they say, Who sees us? No man, and therefore not God himself. The consultations they had about their own safety, they kept to themselves, and never asked God's advice concerning them: nay, they knew they were displeasing to him, but thought they could conceal them from him; and if he did not know them, he could not baffle and defeat them. See what foolish, fruitless pains sinners take in their sinful ways; they seek deep, they sink deep, to hide their counsel from their Lord, who sits in heaven and laughs at them. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom both of the carnal worship and carnal confidence of hypocrites: *Psal. xciv. 7. Ezek. viii. 12. ix. 9.*

(2.) The absurdity of their politics demonstrated, ver. 16. *Surely your turning the things upside down thus, your various projects, turning your affairs this and that way to make them shape as you would have them; or rather your averting the order of things, and thinking to make God's providence give attendance to your projects, and that God must know no more than you think fit, which is perfectly turning things up-side down, and beginning at the wrong end, it shall be esteemed as the potter's clay, i. e. God will turn and manage you, and all your counsels, with as much ease, and as absolute a power, as the potter forms and fashions his clay.* See how God despiseth, and therefore what little reason we have to dread these contrivances of men that are carried on without God, much less against him. They that think to hide their counsels from God, (1.) They do in effect deny him to be their Creator: It is as if the work should say of him that made it, he made me not, I made myself. If God made us, he certainly knows us, as the psalmist shews, *Psal. cxxxix. 1—13, 14, 15.* So that they who say he doth not see them, had as good say, he did not make them. Much of the wickedness of the wicked ariseth from this, they forget that God formed them, *Deut. xxxii. 18.* Or, (2.) which comes all to one, they deny him to be a wise Creator! *The thing framed saith, of him that framed it, he has no understanding;* for if he had understanding to make us so curiously, especially to make us intelligent beings, and to put understanding into the inward part, Job xxxviii. 36, do doubt he hath understanding to know us, and all we say and do. As they that quarrel with God so they that think to conceal themselves from him, do in effect charge him with folly: but he that formed the eye shall he not see? *Psal. xciv. 9.*

17. Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall

be esteemed as a forest? 18. ¶ And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. 19. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. 20. For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: 21. That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought. 22. Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. 23. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy one of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. 24. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured, shall learn doctrine.

They that sought to hide their counsels from the Lord, were fain to turn things up-side down, ver. 16. and they intended to do it unknown to God: but God here tells them that he will turn things up-side down his way; and let us see whose word shall stand, his or their's. They disbelieve providence; wait a while, saith God, and you shall be convinced by ocular demonstration, that there is a God that governs the world, and that he governs it, and orders all the changes that are in for the good of his church. The wonderful revolution here foretold, may refer primarily to the happy settlement of the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem after the defeat of Sennacherib's attempt and the repose which good people then enjoyed; when they were delivered from the alarms of the sword both by war and persecution. But it may look farther, to the rejection of the Jews at the first planting of the gospel (for their hypocrisy, and infidelity was here foretold, ver. 13.) and the admission of the Gentiles into the church.

In general it is a great and surprising change that is here foretold, ver. 17. Lebanon, that was a forest, is turned into a fruitful field; and Carmel, that was a fruitful field, shall become a forest: it is a counter-change. Note, Great changes both for the better and for the worse, are often made in a very little while. It was a sign given them of the defeat of Sennacherib, that the ground should be more than ordinary fruitful, chap. xxxvii. 30. *Ye shall eat this year such as grows of itself;* food for man shall be as food for beasts useful to be, the spontaneous products of the soil; then Lebanon became a fruitful field; so fruitful, that that which used to be reckoned a fruitful field in comparison with it, should be looked upon but as a forest. When a great harvest of souls was gathered in to Christ from among the Gentiles, then the wilderness was turned into a fruitful field; and the Jewish church, that had long been a fruitful field, became a desolate and deserted forest, *Isa. liv. 1.*

In particular, 1. Those that were ignorant shall become intelligent, ver. 18. Those that understood not this prophecy, but it was to them as a sealed book, ver. 11. when it is accomplished, shall understand it, and shall acknowledge not only the hand of God in the event, but the voice of God in the prediction of it. *The deaf shall then hear the words of the book;* the fulfilling of prophecy is the best exposition of it. The poor Gentiles shall then have divine revelation brought among them; and those that sat in darkness, shall see a great light; that were blind, shall see out of obscurity, for the gospel was sent to them to open their eyes, Acts xxvi. 18. Observe, in order to the making of men fruitful in good affections and actions, the course God's grace takes with them is, to open their understandings, and make them hear the words of God's book.

2. Those that were erroneous shall become orthodox, ver. 24. *They that erred in spirit,* that were under mistakes and misapprehensions concerning the words of the book, and the meaning of them, they shall come to understanding, to a right understanding of things: the Spirit of truth shall rectify their mistakes, and lead them into all truth. This should encourage us to pray for those that have erred, and are deceived, that God can, and often doth bring such to understanding. They that murmured at the truths of God as hard sayings, and loved to pick quarrels with them, shall learn the true meaning of these doctrines, and then they will be better reconciled to them. They that erred concerning the providence of God, as to public affairs, and murmured at the disposals of it: when they shall see the issue of things, shall better understand them, and be aware what God was driving at in all, *Hos. xiv. 9.*

3. Those that were melancholy, shall become cheerful and pleasant, ver. 19. *The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord:* those that are poor in the world, and poor in spirit, that being in affliction accommodate themselves to their affliction, are purely passive, and not passionate; when they see God appearing for them, they shall add, or repeat joy in the Lord. This intimates, that even in their distress they kept up their joy in the Lord, but now they increased it. Note, They that when they are in trouble can truly rejoice in God, shall soon have cause given them greatly to rejoice in him. When joy in the world is decreasing and fading, joy in God is increasing and getting ground; this shining light shall shine more and more; for that which is aimed at is, that *this joy may be full.* Even the poor among men may rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, and their poverty needs not deprive them of that joy, *Hab. iii. 17, 18.* And the meek, the humble, the patient and dispassionate, shall grow in this joy. Note, The grace of meekness will contribute very much to the increase of our holy joy.

4. The enemies that were formidable shall become despicable. Sennacherib, that terrible one, and his great army, that put the country into such a consternation, shall be brought to nought, ver. 20. shall be quite disabled to do any farther mischief. The power of Satan, that terrible one indeed, shall be broken by the prevalency of Christ's gospel, and they that were subject to bondage through the fear of him that had the power of death, shall be delivered, *Heb. ii. 14, 15.*

5. The persecutors that were vexatious shall be quieted; and so those they were troublesome to shall be quiet from the fear of them. To complete the repose of God's people, not only the terrible ones from abroad shall be brought to nought, but the scornful at home too shall be consumed and cut off by Hezekiah's reformation. Those are a happy people, and likely to be so, who when God gives them victory and success against their terrible enemies abroad, take care to suppress vice and profaneness, and the spirit of persecution, those most dangerous enemies at home. Or, they shall be consumed and cut off by the judgments of God, shall be singled out, be made examples of: or they shall insensibly wait away, being put to confusion by the fulfilling of those predictions which they had made a jest at.

Observe,

Observe what had been the wickedness of these scorners, for which they should be cut off; they had been persecutors of God's people and prophets, probably of the prophet Isaiah particularly, and therefore he complains their feelingly of them, and of their subtil malice. Some as informers and persecutors, others as judges, did all they could to take away his life, or at least his liberty. And this is very applicable to the chief-priests and Pharisees, that persecuted Christ and his apostles, and for that sin they and their nation and scorners were cut off and consumed. (1.) They ridiculed the prophets and the serious professors of religion; they despised them, and did their utmost to bring them into contempt: they were scorners, and sat in the seat of the scornful. (2.) They lay at catch for an occasion against them by their spies, they watch for iniquity, to see if they could lay hold on any thing that is said or done, that may be called an iniquity; or, they themselves watch for an opportunity to do mischief, as Judas did to betray our Lord Jesus. (3.) They took advantage against them for the least slip of the tongue: and if a thing were never so little said amiss, it served them to ground an indictment upon. They made a man, though he were never so wise and a good man, though he were a man of God, an offender for a word, a word mischosen or misplaced, when they could not but know that it was well meant. They cavilled at every word that the prophet spoke to them by the way of admonition, though never so innocently spoken, and without any design to affront them. They put the worst construction upon what was said, and made it criminal by strained interpretations. Those who consider how apt we are all to speak unadvisedly, and to mistake what we hear, will think it very unjust and unfair to make a man an offender for a word. (4.) They did all they could to bring those into trouble that dealt faithfully with them, and told them of their faults. Those that reprove in the gates, i. e. reprovers by office, that were bound by the duty of their place, as prophets, as judges, and magistrates, to shew people their transgressions, they hated these, and laid snares for them, as the Pharisees' emissaries, who were sent to watch our Saviour that they might entangle him in his talk, Matt. xxii. 15. that they might have something to lay to his charge which might render him odious to the people or obnoxious to the government; so persecuted they the prophets; and it is next to impossible for the most cautious to place their words so warily, as to escape such snares. See how base wicked people are, who bear ill-will to those who out of good-will to them, seek to save their soul from death: and see what need reprovers have both of courage to do their duty, and prudence to avoid the snare. (5.) They pervert judgment, and will never let an honest man carry an honest cause; they turn aside the just for a thing of nought, i. e. they condemn him, or give the cause against him upon no evidence, no colour, or pretence whatsoever: they run a man down, and misrepresent him by all the little arts and tricks they can devise, as they did our Saviour. We must not think it strange if we see the best of men thus treated; the disciple is not greater than his master; But wait a while, and God will not only bring forth their righteousness, but cut off and consume these scorners.

6. Jacob that was made to blush by the reproaches, and made to tremble by the threatenings of his enemies, shall now be relieved both against his shame and against his fear, by the rolling away of those reproaches and the defeating of those threatenings: ver. 22. Thus the Lord saith, who redeemed Abraham; i. e. called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and so rescued him from the idolatry of his fathers, and plucked him as a brand out of the fire: He that redeemed Abraham out of his snares and troubles, will redeem all that are by faith his genuine seed out of theirs. He that began his care of his church in the redemption of Abraham, when it and its Redeemer were in his loins, will not now cast off the care of it, because the enemies of his people are so industrious both to blacken them and to frighten them, therefore he will appear for the house of Jacob, and they shall not be ashamed as they have been; but shall have wherewith to answer these that reproach them, nor shall their faces now wax pale; but they shall gather courage, and look their enemies in the face without change of countenance; as they have reason to do who have the God of Abraham on their side.

7. Jacob, that thought his family would be extinct, and the entail of religion quite cut off, shall have the satisfaction of seeing a numerous progeny devoted to God for a generation, ver. 23. (1.) He shall see his children; multitudes of believers and praying people; the spiritual seed of his faithful Abraham and wrestling Jacob: having his quiver full of these arrows, he shall not be ashamed, (ver. 22.) but shall speak with his enemies in the gate, Psal. cxvii. 5. Christ shall not be ashamed, (Isa. l. 7.) for he shall see his seed, (chap. liii. 10.) He sees some, and foresees more, in the midst of him, flocking to the church and residing there. (2.) His children are the work of God's hands, being formed by him they are formed for him; his workmanship, created unto good works. It is some comfort to parents to think that their children are God's creatures, the work of the hands of his providence: but it will be much more a comfort to them, to see their children his new creatures, the work of the hands of his grace. (3.) He and his children shall sanctify the name of God as their God, as the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear and worship the God of Israel. This is opposed to his being ashamed and waxing pale; when he is delivered from his contempt and dangers, he shall not magnify himself; but sanctify the Holy One of Jacob. If God make our condition easy, we must endeavour to make his name glorious. Parents and children are then ornaments and comforts indeed to each other, when they join in sanctifying the name of God; when parents give up their children, and children give up themselves to God to be to him for a name and a praise, then the forest will soon become a fruitful field.

CHAP. XXX.

The prophecy of this chapter seems to relate (as that in the chapter before) to the approaching danger of Jerusalem, and the desolations of Judah by Sennacherib's invasion. Here is, (1.) A just reproof to those who in that distress trusted to the Egyptians for help, and were all in a hurry to fetch succours from Egypt, ver. 1-7. (2.) A terrible threatening against those that slighted the good advice which God by his prophets gave them for the repose of their minds in that distress, assuring them that whatever became of others, the judgment would certainly overtake them, ver. 8-17. (3.) A gracious promise to those who trusted in God, that they should not only see through the troubles; but should see happy days after it, times of joy and reformation and plenty of the means of grace; and therewith plenty of outward good things, and increasing joys and triumphs, ver. 18-26. and these promises are many of them very applicable to gospel-grace. (4.) A prophecy of the total rout and ruin of the Assyrian army, which shall be an occasion of great joy, and an introduction to these happy times, ver. 27-33.

1. **WOE** to the rebellious children, faith the LORD. that take counsel, but not of me: and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that

they may add sin to sin. 2. That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth: to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! 3. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. 4. For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. 5. They were all ashamed of the people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. 6. The burden of the beasts of the south, into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence came the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels to a people that shall not profit them. 7. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.

It was often the fault and folly of the people of the Jews, that when they were insulted by their neighbours on one side, they sought for succour from their neighbours on the other side, instead of looking up to God, and putting their confidence in him. Against the Israelites they fought to the Assyrians, 2 Chron. xiv. 2, 3. Against the Assyrians they here fought to the Egyptians, and Rabshakeh upbraided them with it, 2 Kings xviii. 21. Now observe here,

1. How this sin of theirs is described, and what there was in it that was provoking to God. When they saw themselves in danger and distress, (1.) They would not consult with God; They would do things of their own heads, and not advise with God; though they had a ready and certain way of doing it by Urim or prophets. They were so confident of the prudence of their own measures, that they thought it needless to consult the oracle; nay, they were not willing to put it to that issue, they take counsel among themselves, and one from another; but they do not ask counsel, much less will they take counsel of me. They cover with a covering, i. e. they think to secure themselves with one shelter or other, which may serve to cover them from the violence of the storm: but not of my Spirit, not such as God by his Spirit in the mouth of his prophets directed them to; and therefore it will prove too short a covering, and a refuge of lies. (2.) They could not confide in God: They did not think it enough to have God on their side, nor were they at all solicitous to make him their friend, but they strengthened themselves in the strength of Pharaoh; they thought him a powerful ally, and doubted not but to be able to cope with the Assyrian while they had him for them. The shadow of Egypt (and it was but a shadow) was the covering in which they wrapped themselves.

2. What was the evil of this sin? (1.) It bespoke them rebellious children, and a woe is here denounced against them under that character, ver. 1. They were in profession God's children; but not trusting in him, they were justly stigmatized as rebellious; for if we disturb God's providence, we do in effect withdraw ourselves from our allegiance. (2.) They added sin to sin; It was sin that brought them into distress: and then, instead of repenting, they trespassed yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. And they that had abused God's mercies to them, in making them the fuel of their lusts, abused their afflictions too in making them an excuse for their distrust of God: and so they make ill worse; and add sin to sin; and they that do so, as they make their own chain heavy, so it is just with God to make their plague wonderful. Now that which aggravated it was, (1.) That they took so much pains to secure the Egyptians for them; they walk or go down to Egypt, travel up and down to find an advantageous road thither: but they have not asked at my mouth, never considered whether God would allow and approve of it or no. (2.) That they were at such a vast expence to do it, ver. 6. They load the beasts of the south (horses fetched from Egypt, which lay south from Judea) with their riches; fancying, as it is common with people in a fright, that they were safer any where than where they were: Or they sent their riches thither as bribes to Pharaoh's courtiers, to engage them in their interest, or as pay for their army. God would have helped them gratis; but if they will have it from the Egyptians they must pay dear for it, and they seem willing to do so. The riches that are so spent will turn to an ill account: They carried their effects to Egypt through a land (so it may be read) of trouble and anguish; that vast howling wilderness which lay between Canaan and Egypt, from whence come the lion and fiery serpent, Deut. viii. 15. They would venture through that dangerous wilderness to bring what they had to Egypt. Or it may be meant of Egypt itself, which had been to Israel a house of bondage, and therefore a land of trouble and anguish, and which abounded in ravenous and venomous creatures; See what dangers men run into that forsake God: and what dangers will they run into in pursuance of their carnal confidences, and their expectations from the creature.

3. What would be the consequence of it: (1.) The Egyptians would receive their ambassadors, would speak them fair, and be willing to treat with them: ver. 4. His princes were at Zoan, at Pharaoh's court there, and had their audience of the king, who encouraged them to depend upon his friendship, and the succours he would send them. But, (2.) They would not answer their expectation; they could not profit them, ver. 5. For God saith, they shall not profit them, ver. 6. and every creature is that to us and no more than he makes it to be: Either the forces they were to furnish them with could not be raised in time; or when they were raised they were not fit for service, and they would not venture any of their veteran troops in the expedition: Or the march was so long that they could not come up when they had occasion for them. Or the Egyptians would not be cordial to Israel, but would secretly incline to the Assyrians upon some account or other; The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose, ver. 7. They shall hinder and hurt instead of helping. And therefore, (3.) These people that were now so fond of the Egyptians would at length be ashamed of them, and of all their expectations from them, and confidence in them, ver. 3. The strength of Pharaoh, which was your pride, shall be your shame; all your neighbours will upbraid you, and you will upbraid yourselves with your folly in trusting to it: And the shadow of Egypt, that land shadowing with wings (chap. xlviii. 1.) that was your confidence shall be your confusion; it will not only disappoint you, and be the matter of your shame, but it will weaken all your other supports, and be an occasion of mischief to you. God afterwards threatens the ruin of Egypt for this very thing, because they had dealt treacherously with Israel, and been a staff of a reed to them, Ezek. xxix. 6, 7. The princes and ambassadors of Israel that were so forward to court an alliance with them, when they came among them shall see so much of their weakness, or rather of their baseness, that they shall

shall be ashamed of a people that could not be a help or profit to them, but a shame and reproach, ver. 5. Those that trust in God and in his power, providence, and promise, are never made ashamed of their hope: But they that put confidence in any creature, will sooner or later find it a reproach to them. God is true, and may be trusted: but every man a liar, and must be suspected. The Creator is a rock of ages, the creature a broken reed; we cannot expect too little from man, or too much from God.

4. The use and application of all this, ver. 7. *Therefore have I cried concerning this matter*, this project of their's: I have published it that all might take notice of it: I have pressed it as one in earnest, *Their strength is to sit still*, in a humble dependence upon God and his goodness, and a quiet submission to his will; and not to vary about and put themselves into a toils, to seek for help from this and the other creature. If we sit still in a day of distress, hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord, and using only lawful, regular methods for our own preservation, this will be strength of our souls, both for services and sufferings, and it will engage the divine strength for us. We weaken ourselves to provoke God to withdraw from us, when we make flesh our arm, for then our heart departeth from the Lord. When we have tired ourselves by seeking for help from creatures, we shall find it the best way of recruiting ourselves to repose in the Creator: Here I am, let him do with me as he pleaseth.

8. ¶ Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: 9. That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: 10. Which say to the seers: See not: and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits; 11. Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. 12. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: 13. Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. 14. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare; so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the earth, or to take water without out of the pit. 15. For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved: in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not. 16. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. 17. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one: at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign upon an hill.

Here, (1.) The preface is very awful; the prophet must not preach only this, but he must write it, ver. 8. write it in a table to be hung up and exposed to public view; he must carefully note it, not in loose papers which might be lost or torn, but in a book to be preserved for posterity in *perpetuum rei memoriam*, let it remain for the time to come a standing testimony against this wicked generation; let it remain not only till the next succeeding ages, but for ever and ever, while the world stands; and so it shall, for the book of the scriptures no doubt shall continue, and be read to the end of time. Let it be written, (1.) To shame the men of the present age, who would not hear and heed it when it was spoken: let it be written that it may not be lost; their children may profit by it though they will not. (2.) To justify God in the judgment he was about to bring upon them; people will be tempted to think he was too hard upon them and over-severe, unless they know how very bad they were, how very provoking, and what fair means God tried with them before he brought it to this extremity. (3.) For warning to others not to do as they did, lest they fare as they fared; it is designed for admonition to those of the remotest place and age, even those upon whom the ends of the world are come, 1 Cor. x. 11. It may be of use for God's ministers not only to preach but to write; for that which is written remains.

(2.) The character given of the profane and wicked Jews is very sad; he must, if he will draw them in their own colours, write this concerning them, and we are sure he doth not bear false witness against them, nor make them worse than they were; for the judgment of God is according to truth, *That this is a rebellious people*, ver. 9. The Jews were, for ought we know, the only professing people God had then in the world, and yet many of them were a rebellious people. (1.) They rebelled against their own convictions and covenants; for they are lying children, that will not stand to what they say, that promise fair, but perform nothing. When he took them into covenant with him, he said of them, *Surely they are my people, children that will not lie*, Isa. lxiii. 8. but they proved otherwise. (2.) They rebelled against the divine authority, they are *children that will not hear the law of the Lord*, nor heed it; but will do as they have a mind, let God himself say what he will to the contrary.

(3.) The charge drawn up against them is very high, and the sentence passed upon them very dreadful.

Two things they here stand charged with, and their doom is read for both, a fearful doom.

1. They forbid the prophets to speak to them in God's name and to deal faithfully with them: This their sin is described, ver. 10, 11. They did set themselves so violently against the prophets to hinder them from preaching, or at least from dealing plainly with them in their preaching, did to banter them and brow-beat them, that they did in effect *say to the seers, see not*. They had the light but they loved darkness rather. It was their privilege that they had seers among them; but they did what they could to put out their eyes. That they had prophets among them; but they did what they could to stop their mouths; for they tormented them in their wicked ways, *Rec. xi. 10*. Those that silence good ministers, and discountenance good preaching, are justly counted and called rebels against God. See what it was in the prophets' preaching, with which they found themselves aggrieved. (1.) The prophets told them of their faults, and warned them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and they could

not bear that. They must speak to them smooth things; must flatter them in their sins, and say they did well, and there was no harm; no peril in the course of life they lived. Let a thing be never so right and true, if it be not smooth they will not hear it. But if it be agreeable to the good opinion they have of themselves, and will confirm them in that, though it be never so false, and never so great a cheat upon them, they will have it prophesied to them. Those deserve to be deceived that desire to be so. (2.) The prophets stopped them in their sinful pursuits, and stood in their way like the angel in Balaam's road, with the sword of God's wrath drawn in their hand; so that they could not proceed without terror. And this they took heinously; and when they went on forwardly in the way of their hearts, they said to the prophets, *Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the paths*, What do you do in our way? Cannot you let us alone to do as we please? Those have their hearts fully set in them to do evil, that bid their faithful monitors stand out of their way; *for fear, why shouldst thou be smitten*, 2 Chron. xxv. 16. (3.) The prophets were continually telling them of the Holy One of Israel, what an enemy he is to sin, and how severely he will reckon with sinners; and this they could not endure to hear of. Both the thing itself, and the expression of it was too serious for them; and therefore if the prophets will speak to them, they will make it their bargain that they shall not call God the *Holy One of Israel*; for God's holiness is that attribute which of all other wicked people most dread. Let us no more be troubled with that state-preface (as Mr. White calls it) to your impertinent harangues. Those have reason to fear perishing in their sins, that cannot bear to be frightened out of them.

Now what is the doom passed upon them for this? We have it, ver. 12, 13. Observe, (1.) Who it is that gives judgment upon them; *Thus saith the Holy One of Israel*. That title of God which they particularly excepted against, the prophet makes use of. Faithful ministers will not be driven from using such expressions as are proper to awaken sinners, though they be displeasing; We must tell men that God is the *Holy One of Israel*, and so they shall find him; whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. (2.) What the ground of the judgment is; *because they despise this word*: either in general, every word that the prophets said to them, or this word in particular, which speaks God the *Holy One of Israel*; they despise this and will neither make it their fear to stand in awe of it, nor make it their hope to put any confidence in it; but rather than they will be beholden to the *Holy One of Israel*, will trust in oppression and perverseness, in the wealth they have got, and the interests they have made by fraud and violence; or in those sinful methods they have taken for their own security, in contradiction to God and his will: On these they stay, and therefore it is just they fall. (3.) What the judgment is that is passed upon them: *This iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall*: This confidence of yours will be like a house built upon the sand, which will fall in the storm, and bury the builder in the ruins of it. Your contempt of that word of God which you might build upon, will make every thing else you trust to like a wall that bulgeth or bellieth out: which if any weight be laid upon it comes down, nay, which often sinks with its own weight. The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves should be, (1.) A surprising ruin; the breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant, when they do not expect it, which will make it the more frightful; and when they are not prepared nor provided for it, which will make it the more fatal. (2.) An utter ruin, universal and irreparable. You and all your confidences shall be not only weak as the potter's clay, chap. xxix. 16. but broken to pieces as the potter's vessel: He that hath the rod of iron shall break it, *Psal. i. 9*. and he shall not spare, nor have any regard to it, nor be in care to preserve or keep whole any part of it: But when once it is broken so as to be unfit for use, let it be dashed, let it be crushed all to pieces, so that there may not remain one sherd big enough to take up a little fire or water, two things we have daily need of, and which poor people commonly fetch in a piece of a broken pitcher; They shall not only be as a *bowing wall*, *Psal. lxxii. 3*. but as a broken mug or glass, which is good for nothing, nor can ever be made whole again.

2. They slighted the gracious directions God gave them; not only how to secure themselves, and make themselves safe; but how to compose themselves and make themselves easy; and would take their own way, ver. 15, 16, 17. Observe here,

1. The method God put them into for salvation and strength: The God that knew them, and knew what was proper for them, and desired their welfare, gave them this prescription; and it is recommended to us all; (1.) Would we be saved from the evil of every calamity, guarded against the temptation of it, and secured from the curse of it, which are the only evil things in it, it must be in returning and rest; in returning to God, and reposing in him as your rest; Let us return from our evil ways, into which we have gone aside, and rest and settle in the way of God and duty, and that is the way to be saved. Return from this project of going down to Egypt, and rest satisfied in the will of God, and then you may trust him with your safety. In returning, *i. e.* in the thorough reformation of your hearts and lives; and in rest, *i. e.* in an entire submission of your souls to God, and a complacency in him, *you shall be saved*. (2.) Would we be strengthened to do what is required of us, and to bear what is laid upon us, it must be in quietness and in confidence; *i. e.* we must keep our spirits calm and sedate by a continual dependence upon God, and his power and goodness: we must retire into ourselves with a holy quietness, suppressing all turbulent and tumultuous passions, and keeping the peace in our own minds: And we must rely upon God with a holy confidence, that he can do what he will, and will do what is best for his people. And this will be our strength; it will inspire us with such a holy fortitude, as will carry us with ease and courage through all the difficulties we may meet with.

2. The contempt they put upon this prescription; they would not take God's counsel, though it was so much for their own good. And justly will they die of their disease that will not take God for their physician. We are certainly enemies to ourselves, if we will not be subjects to him. They would not so much as try the method prescribed; *But ye said, No*, (ver. 16.) we will not compose ourselves, for we will flee upon horses, and we will ride upon the swift; we will hurry hither and thither to fetch in foreign aids: They think themselves wiser than God, and that they know what is good for themselves better than he doth. When Sennacherib took all the fenced cities of Judah, those rebellious children would not be persuaded to sit still and patiently to expect God's appearing for them, as he did wonderfully at last; but they would shift for their own safety, and thereby they exposed themselves to so much the more danger.

3. The sentence passed upon them for this: Their sin shall be their punishment; you will flee and therefore you shall flee; you will be upon the full speed, and therefore so shall those be that pursue you: the dogs are most apt to run barking after him that rides fast. The conquerors protected those that sat still, but pursued those that made their escape; and so that very project by which they hoped to save themselves, was justly their ruin, and the most guilty suffered most. It is foretold, ver. 17. (1.) That they should be easily cut off; they should be so dispirited with their own fears, increased by their flight, that one of the enemy should defeat a thousand

thousand of them, and five put an army to fight; which could never be, *unless their rock had sold them*, Deut. xxxii. 30. (2.) That they should be generally cut off, and only here and there one should escape, alone in a solitary place, and left for a spectacle too, *as a beacon upon the top of a mountain*; a warning to others to avoid the like sinful courses and carnal confidences.

18. ¶ And therefore will the LORD wait that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him. 19. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry: when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. 20. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers. 21. And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. 22. Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, get thee hence. 23. Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous; in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. 24. The oxen likewise and the young asses that eat the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan. 25. And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. 26. Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

The closing words of the foregoing paragraph, *ye shall be left as a beacon upon a mountain*, some understand as a promise, that a remnant of them should be reserved as monuments of mercy; and here the prophet tells them what good times should succeed these calamities; or the first words in the paragraph may be read by way of antithesis, *Notwithstanding this, yet will the Lord wait that he may be gracious*. The prophet having shewed, that those who have made Egypt their confidence, would be ashamed of it; here shews, that they who sat still, and made God alone their confidence, would have the comfort of it. It is a matter of comfort to the people of God when the times are very bad, that *all will be well yet*; well with them that fear God, when we say to the wicked, *It shall be ill with them*.

1. God will be gracious to them, and will have mercy on them: That is the foundation of all good; If we find favour with God, and he have mercy upon us, we shall have comfort according to the time that we have been afflicted. (1.) He will wait to be gracious, ver. 18. He will wait till you return to him and seek his face, and then he will be ready to meet you with mercy. He will wait that he may do it in the best and fittest time, when it will be most for his glory; when it will come to you with the most pleasing surprise. He will continually follow you with his favours, and not let slip any opportunity of being gracious to you. (2.) He will stir up himself to deliver you, will be exalted, will be raised up out of his holy habitation, Zech. ii. 13. that he may appear for you in more than ordinary instances of power and goodness; and thus he will be exalted, i. e. he will glorify his own name, that is, he aims at in having mercy on his people. (3.) He will be very gracious, ver. 19. And this in answer to prayer; which makes his kindness doubly kind; He will be gracious to thee at the voice of thy cry; the cry of thy necessity, when that is most urgent; the cry of thy prayer when that is most fervent; *When he shall hear it*, there needs no more, at the first word, he will answer thee, and say, *Here I am*. Herein he is very gracious indeed.

In particular, (1.) Those that were disturbed in the possession of their estates, shall again enjoy them quietly: When the danger is over, *the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem*, as they used to do; they shall dwell safely, free from the fear of evil. (2.) Those that were all in tears, shall have cause to rejoice, and shall weep no more, and those who dwell in Zion, the holy city, will find enough there to wipe away tears from their eyes. Now this is grounded upon two great truths; 1. That *the Lord is a God of judgment*, i. e. he is both wise and just in all the disposals of his providence, true to his word, and tender of his people. If he corrected his children it is with judgment, Jer. x. 24. with moderation and discretion, considering their frame. We think we may safely refer ourselves to a man of judgment, and shall we not commit our way to a God of judgment? 2. That therefore all those are blessed that wait for him: that not only wait on him with their prayers, but wait on him for their hopes; that will not take any indirect course to extricate themselves out of their straits, or anticipate their deliverance, but patiently expect God's appearances for them in his own way and time. Because God is infinitely wise, those are truly happy that refer themselves to him.

2. They shall not again know the want of the means of grace, ver. 20. Here (1.) It is supposed that they might be brought into straits and troubles, after this deliverance was wrought for them. It was promised, ver. 19. that they should weep no more, and that God would be gracious to them; and yet here it is taken for granted that God may give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, prisoner's fare, 1 Kings xxii. 27. coarse and sorry food, such as the poor use: when one trouble is over, we know not how soon another may succeed; and we may have an interest in the favour of God, and such consolations as are sufficient to prohibit weeping; and yet may have bread of adversity given us to eat, and water of affliction to drink; Let us therefore not judge of love or hatred by what is before us. (2.) It is promised that their eyes should see their teachers, i. e. that they should have faithful teachers among them, and should have hearts to regard them, and not slight them as they had done; and then they

might the better be reconciled to the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. It was a common saying among the old Puritans, *brown bread and the gospel is good fare*. A famine of bread is nothing so great a judgment as a famine of the word of God, Amos viii. 11, 12. It seems their teachers had been removed into corners, probably being forced to shift for their safety in the reign of Ahaz, but it shall be so no more. Truth seeks no corners for concealment (*Veritas non querit angulos*); but the teachers of truth may sometimes be driven into corners for shelter, and it goes ill with the church when it is so; when the woman with her crown of twelve stars is forced to flee into the wilderness, Rev. xii. 6. when the prophets are hid by fifty in a cave, 1 Kings xviii. 4. But God will find a time to call the teachers out of their corners again, and to replace them in their solemn assemblies, which shall see their own teachers, the eyes of all the synagogue being fastened on them, Luke iv. 20. And it will be the more pleasing because of the restraint they have been for sometime under, as light out of darkness, as life from the dead. To all that love God and their own souls, this return of faithful teachers out of their corners, especially with a promise that they shall not be removed into corners any more, is the most acceptable part of any deliverance, and has comfort enough in it to sweeten even the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. But this is not all, it is promised that they shall have the benefit not only of a public ministry, but of private and particular admonition and advice, ver. 21. *Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee*, calling after thee as a man calls after a traveller that he sees going out of his road. Observe, (1.) Whence this word shall come: from behind thee, from some one that thou dost not see, but sees thee. Thine eyes see thy teachers, but this is a teacher out of sight, it is thine own conscience which shall now by the grace of God, be awakened to do its office. (2.) What the word shall be; *This is the way, walk ye in it*. When thou art doubting, conscience shall direct thee to the way of duty; when thou art dull and trifling, conscience shall quicken thee in that way. As God hath not left himself without witness, so he has not left us without guides to shew us our way. (3.) The seasonableness of this word: it shall come, when ye turn to the right hand or to the left. We are very apt to miss our way; there are turnings on both hands, and those so tracked and seemingly straight as that they may easily be mistaken for the right way; there are right hand and left hand errors, extremes on each side vicing; the tempter is busy courting us into the by paths. It is happy then if by the particular counsels of a faithful minister, or friend, or the checks of conscience and the stirrings of God's Spirit, we be set right and prevented from going wrong. (4.) The success of this word; it shall not only be spoken, but thine ears shall hear it; whereas God has formerly spoken once, yea, twice, and thou hast not perceived it, Job xxxiii. 14. now thou shalt listen attentively to these secret whispers, and hear them with an obedient ear. If God give us not only the word, but the hearing ear, not only the means of grace, but a heart to make good use of those means, we have reason to say he is very gracious to us, and reason to hope he has yet farther mercy in store for us.

3. They shall be cured of their idolatry, shall fall out with their idols, and never be reconciled to them again, ver. 21. The deliverance God shall work for them, shall convince them that it is their interest as well as duty to serve him only: and they shall own, that as their trouble was brought upon them for their idolatries, so it was removed upon condition they should not return home. This is also the good effect of their seeing their teachers and hearing the word behind them: by this it shall appear they are the better for the means of grace they enjoy, they shall break off from their best beloved sin. Observe, (1.) How foolishly mad they had formerly been upon their idols in the days of their apostacy: idolaters are said to be mad upon their idols, Jer. l. 35. dotingly fond of them; they had graven images of silver and molten images of gold, and though gold needs no painting, they had coverings and ornaments on these; they spared no cost in doing honour to their idols. (2.) How wisely (mad if I may so speak) they now were at their idols, what a holy indignation they conceived against them in the day of their repentance: they not only degraded their images but defaced them, not only defaced them but defiled them; they not only spoiled the shape of them, but in a pious fury threw away the gold and silver they were made of, though otherwise valuable, and convertible to a good use: they could not find in their hearts to make any vessel of honour of it; the rich clothes wherewith their images were dressed up, they cast away as a filthy cloth which those that touch must be unclean until the even, Lev. xv. 23. Note, To all true penitents, sin is become very odious, they loathe it, and loathe themselves because of it; they cast it away to the dung-hill, and sit fast places for it, nay, to the cross, for they crucify the flesh; their cry against it is, *Crucify it, Crucify it*; they say unto it, *Get thee hence; Abi hinc in malorum rem*. They are resolved never to harbour it any more. They put as far from them as they can all the occasions of sin and temptations to it, though they are as a right eye or a right hand; and protest against it as Ephraim did, Hos. xiv. 8. *What have I to do any more with idols?* Probably this was fulfilled in many particular persons, who by the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's army were convinced of the folly of their idolatry and forsook it; it was fulfilled in the body of the Jewish nation at their return from their captivity in Babylon, for they abhorred idols ever after; and it is accomplished daily in the conversion of souls by the power of divine grace, from spiritual idolatry to the fear and love of God. Those that join themselves to the Lord must abandon every sin, and say unto it, *Get thee hence*.

4. God will then give them plenty of all good things: when he gives them their teachers, and they give him their hearts, so that they begin to seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, then all other things shall be added to them, Mat. vi. 33. And when the people are brought to praise God, then shall the earth yield her increase, and with it God, even our own God, shall bless us; Psalm lxxvii. 5, 6. so it follows here; when ye shall have abandoned your idols, Then shall God give the rain of your seed, ver. 23. When we return to God in a way of duty, he will meet us with his favours. (1.) God will give you rain of your seed, i. e. rain to water the seed you sow, just at the time that it calls for it, as much as it needs and no more. Observe, How man's industry and God's blessing concur to the good things we enjoy relating to the life that now is, *Thou shalt sow the ground, that is, thy part, and then God will give the rain of thy seed*, that is his part: it is so in spiritual fruit, we must take pains with our hearts, and then wait on God for his grace. (2.) The increase of the earth shall be rich and good, and every thing the best of the kind: it shall be fat and fat, very fat and very good, fat and plenteous, so we read it: good and enough of it; your land shall be Canaan indeed: it was remarkably so after the defeat of Sennacherib, by the special blessing of God, chap. xxxvii. 30. God would thus repair the losses they sustained by that devastation. (3.) Not only the tillage but the pasture-ground should be remarkably fruitful: *the cattle shall feed in large pastures*: those that are at grass shall have room enough, and the oxen and asses that are kept up for use, to ear the ground, which must be the better fed for their being worked, they shall eat clean provender; the corn shall not be given them in the chaff as usual, to make it go the farther, but good clean corn fit for man's use, being winnowed with the fan;

sin: the brute creatures shall share in the abundance, it is fit they should, for they groan under the burden of the curse which man's sin has brought upon the earth. (4.) Even the tops of the mountains that used to be barren shall be so well watered with the rain of heaven, that there shall be rivers and streams there, and running down thence to the valleys, *ver. 25.* and this in the day of the great slaughter that should be made by the angel in the camp of the Assyrians; when the towers and batteries they had erected for the carrying on of the siege of Jerusalem, the army being slain, should fall of course. Probably this was fulfilled in the letter of it, and at about the same time that the army was cut off there were extraordinary rains in mercy to the land.

5. The effect of all this should be extraordinary comfort and joy to the people of God, *ver. 26.* light shall increase, *i. e.* knowledge shall; when the prophecies are accomplished they shall be fully understood; or rather, triumph shall; the light of the joy that is sown for the righteous, shall now come up with a great increase; the *light of the moon* shall become as bright and as strong as that of the sun, and that of the sun shall increase proportionably, and be *as the light of seven days*; every one shall be much more cheerful and appear much more pleasant than usual: There shall be a high spring tide of joy in Judah and Jerusalem, upon occasion of the ruin of the Assyrian army, *when the Lord binds up the breach of the people*, not only saves them from being farther wounded, but heals the wounds that have been given by this invasion, and makes up all their losses: the great distress they were reduced to, their despair of relief, and the suddenness of their deliverance, would much augment their joy. This is not unfitly applied by many to the light which the gospel brought into the world, to them that sat in darkness, which as far exceeded the Old Testament light as that of the sun doth that of the moon, and which proclaims *healing to the broken hearted*, and the *binding up of their wounds*.

27. ¶ Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is a devouring fire: 28. And his breath as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck; to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. 29. Ye shall have a song as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel. 30. And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire with scattering and tempest, and hailstones. 31. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down which smote with a rod. 32. And every place where the grounded staff shall pass which the LORD shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. 33. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

This terrible prediction of the ruin of the Assyrian army, though it is a threatening to them, in part of the promise to the Israel of God; that God would not only punish the Assyrians for the mischief they had done to the Israel of God, but would disable and deter them from doing the like again: and this prediction which would now shortly be accomplished, would ratify and confirm the foregoing promises, which would be accomplished in the latter days.

Here is, 1. God Almighty angry, and coming forth in anger against the Assyrians; he is here introduced in all the power and all the terror of his wrath, *ver. 27.* The name of Jehovah, which the Assyrians disdain, and set at a distance from them, as if they were out of its reach, and it could do them no harm, *behold it cometh from far*, a messenger in the name of the Lord, cometh from as far off as heaven itself; he is a messenger of wrath, burning with his anger: God's lips are full of indignation at the blasphemy of Rabshakeh, who compared the God of Israel with the gods of the heathen; his tongue is a devouring fire, for he can speak his proud enemies to ruin; his very breath comes with as much force as an overflowing stream, and with it he shall slay the wicked, *chap. xi. 4.* He doth not trifle or smother his resentments, as men do theirs, when they are either causeless or impotent, but *he shall cause his glorious voice to be heard* when he proclaims war with an enemy that sets him at defiance, *ver. 30.* He shall display the indignation of his anger, anger in the highest degree, it shall be as the flame of a devouring fire, which carries and consumes all before it; with lightning or dissipation, and with tempest and hailstones, all which are the formidable phenomena of nature, and therefore expressive of the terror of the Almighty God of nature.

2. The execution done by this anger of the Lord; men are often angry, when they can only threaten and talk big; but when God causeth his glorious voice to be heard, that shall not be all, he will shew the lighting down of his arm too, *ver. 30.* The operation of his providence shall accomplish the menaces of his word; they that would not see the lifting up of his arm, *chap. xxvi. 11.* shall feel the lighting down of it, and find to their cost that the burden thereof is heavy, *ver. 27.* so heavy as that they cannot bear it, not bear up against it; but must unavoidably sink and be crushed under it; *Who knows the power of his anger?* or imagines what an offended God can do?

Five things are here prepared for the execution:

1. Here is an overflowing stream that shall reach to the midst of the neck, shall quite overwhelm the whole body of the army, and Sennacherib only the head of it, shall keep above water, and escape this stroke, while yet he is referred for another in the house of Nisroch his god. The Assyrian army had been to Judah as an overflowing stream, reaching even to the neck, *chap. viii. 7, 8.* and now the the breath of God's wrath will be so to it.

2. Here is a sieve of vanity with which God would sift these nations of which the Assyrian army was composed, *ver. 28.* The great God can sift nations, for they are all before him as the small dust of the balance; he will sift them, not to gather out them that shall be preserved, but so as to shake them one against another, put them into a mighty consterna-

tion, and shake them all away at last; for it is a sieve of vanity which retains nothing, that they are shaken with, and they are found all chaff.

3. Here is a bridle which God has in their jaws, to curb and restrain them from doing the mischief they would do, and to force and constrain them to serve his purposes against their own will, *chap. x. 7.* God particularly saith of Sennacherib, *chap. xxxvii. 29.* that he will put a hook in his nose and a bridle in his lips; it is a *bridle causing them to err*, *i. e.* forcing them to such methods as will certainly be destructive to themselves and their interest, and in which they will be infatuated. God with a sword guides his people into the right way, *ver. 21.* but with a bridle he turns his enemies headlong upon their own ruin.

4. Here is a rod and a staff, even the voice of the Lord, his word giving orders concerning it, with which the Assyrian shall be beaten down, *ver. 31.* The Assyrian had been himself a rod in God's hand for the chastising of his people, and had smitten them, *chap. x. 5.* that was a transient rod; but against the Assyrian shall go forth a grounded staff that shall give a steady blow, shall stick close to him, and strike home, so as to leave an impression upon him; it is a staff with a foundation founded upon the enemies' deserts, and God's determined counsel; it is a consumption determined, *chap. x. 23.* And therefore there is no escaping it, no getting out of the reach of it, it shall pass in every place where an Assyrian is found, and the Lord shall lay it upon him, and cause it to rest, *ver. 32.* Such is the woeful case of those that persist in enmity to God, *the wrath of God abideth on them.*

5. Here is a Tophet ordained and prepared for them, *ver. 33.* the valley of the sun of Hinnom adjoining to Jerusalem, was called Tophet, in that valley it is supposed many of the Assyrian regiments lay encamped, and were there slain by the destroying angel; or there the bodies of those that were so slain were burned: Hezekiah had lately and from yesterday, so the word is, ordained it, *i. e.* say some, he had ridded it of the images that were set up in it, to which they there burnt their children; and so prepared it to be a receptacle for the dead bodies of their enemies; for the king of Assyria, *i. e.* for his army, it is prepared, and there is fuel enough ready to burn them all; and they shall be consumed as suddenly and effectually as if the fire were kept burning by a continual stream of brimstone, for such the breath of the Lord, his word and his wrath, will be to it. Now as the prophet in the foregoing promises slides insensibly into the promises of gospel graces and comforts; so here in the threatenings of the ruin of Sennacherib's army, he points at the final and everlasting destruction of all impenitent sinners. Our Saviour calls the future misery of the damned *Gehenna*, in allusion to the valley of Hinnom, which gives some countenance to the applying of this to that misery, as also that in the Apocalypse it is so often called the *lake that burns with fire and brimstone*. This is said to be prepared of old for the devil and his angels, for the greatest of sinners, the proudest, and that think themselves not accountable to any for what they say and do; even for kings it is prepared: it is deep and large, sufficient to receive the world of the ungodly; the pile thereof is fire and much wood. God's wrath is the fire, and sinners make themselves fuel to it; and the breath of the Lord, the power of his anger kindles it, and will keep it ever burning. See *Isa. lvi. 24.* Wherefore stand in awe and sin not.

3. The great joy which this should occasion to the people of God; the Assyrian's fall is Jerusalem's triumph, *ver. 29.* Ye shall have a song as in the night, a psalm of praise, such as they sing who by night stand in the house of the Lord, and sing to his glory, who giveth songs in the night; it shall not be a song of vain mirth, but a sacred song, such as was sung when a holy solemnity was kept in a grave and religious manner. Our joy in the fall of the church's enemies must be a holy joy, gladness of heart as when one goes with a pipe, such as the sons of the prophets used when they prophesied. 1 Sam. x. 5. to come to the mountain of the Lord, there to celebrate the praises of the Mighty One of Israel. Nay, in every place where the divine vengeance shall pursue the Assyrians, they shall not only fall unlamented, but all their neighbours shall attend their fall with tabrets and harps, pleased to see how God in battles of shaking, such as shake them out of the world, fights with them, *ver. 32.* for when the wicked perish there is shouting: and it is with a particular satisfaction that wise and good men see the ruin of those who, like the Assyrians have insolently bid defiance to God, and trampled upon all mankind.

CHAP. XXXI.

This chapter is an abridgment of the foregoing chapter; the heads of it are much the same. Here is, 1. A war to those that when the Assyrian army invaded them, trusted to the Egyptians and not to God for succour, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) Assurance given of the care God would take of Jerusalem in that time of danger and distress, *ver. 4, 5.* (3.) A call to repentance and reformation, *ver. 6, 7.* (4.) A prediction of the fall of the Assyrian army, and the fright which the Assyrian king should thereby be put unto, *ver. 8, 9.*

WOE to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses and trust on chariots, because they are many: and in horsemen because they are very strong; but they looked not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD! 2. Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. 3. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God and their horses flesh, and not spirit; when the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fall together. 4. For thus the LORD hath spoken unto me. Like as the lion, and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them, so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. 5. As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it.

This is the last of our chapters together that begin with woe; and they are all the woes to the sinners that were found among the professing people of God; to the drunkards of Ephraim, *chap. xxviii. 1.* to Ariel, *chap. xxix. 1.* to the rebellious children, *chap. xxx. 1.* and here to them that go down to Egypt

Egypt for help: for men's relation to the church will not secure them from divine woes, if they live in contempt of divine laws. Observe.

1. What the sin was that is here reprov'd, *ver. 1.* (1.) Idolizing the Egyptians, and making court to them, as if happy were the people that had the Egyptians for their friends and allies. *They go down to Egypt for help* in every exigence; as if the worshippers of false gods had a better interest in heaven, and were more likely to have success on earth than the servants of the living and true God. That which invites them to Egypt is, that the Egyptians have many chariots to accommodate them with, and horses and horsemen that were very strong; and if they could get a good body of forces from thence into their service, they would think themselves able to deal with the king of Assyria and his numerous army. Their kings were forbidden to multiply horses and chariots, and were told of the folly of trusting to them, *Psal. xx. 7.* but they think themselves wiser than their Bible. (2.) Slighting the God of Israel: *They look not to the holy One of Israel*, as if he were not worth taking notice of in this distress; they advise not with him, seek not his favour, nor are in any care to make him their friend.

2. The gross absurdity and folly of this sin:

1. They neglected one whom if they would not hope in, yet they had reason to fear. They do not seek the Lord, nor make their application to him, yet he also is wise, *ver. 2.* They are solicitous to get the Egyptians into an alliance with them, because they have the reputation of a politic people; and is not God wise too? And would not infinite wisdom engaged on their side stand them in more stead than all the politics of Egypt? They are at the pains of going down to Egypt, a tedious journey, when they might have had better advice and better help by looking up to heaven and would not: but if they will not court God's wisdom to aid for them, they shall find it act against them; he is wise, too wise for them to outwit, and he will bring evil upon those who thus affront him; he will not call back his words as men do, because they are fickle and foolish, but he will arise against the house of the evil-doers, this cabal of them that go down to Egypt, God will appear to their confusion, according to the word that he hath spoken, and will oppose the help they think to bring in from the workers of iniquity. Some think the Egyptians made it one condition of their coming into an alliance with them, that they should worship the gods of Egypt, and they consented to it, and therefore they are both called evil-doers and workers of iniquity.

2. They trusted to those who were unable to help them, and would soon appear to be so, *ver. 3.* Let them know that the Egyptians whom they depend so much upon are men and not God. As it is good for men to trust themselves to be but men, *Psal. ix. 20.* so it is good for us to consider that those we love and trust to are but men. They therefore can do nothing without God, nothing against him, nothing in comparison with him. They are men, and therefore fickle and foolish, mutable and mortal, here to day and gone to-morrow; they are men, and therefore let us not make gods of them, by making them our hope, and confidence, and expecting that in them which is to be found in God only: they are not God, they cannot do that for us which God can do and will, if we trust in him. Let us not then neglect him to seek to them; let us not forsake the rock of ages for broken reeds, nor the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. The Egyptians indeed have horses that are very strong, but they are flesh and not spirit, and therefore as strong as they are, they may be wearied with a long march and become unserviceable, or wounded and slain in battle, and leave their riders to be ridden over. Every one knows this, that the Egyptians are not God, and their horses are not spirit; but they that seek to him for help do not consider it, else they would not put such confidence in them. Sinners may be convicted of folly by the plainest and most self-evident truth, which they cannot deny, but will not believe.

3. They would certainly be ruined with the Egyptians they trusted in, *ver. 3.* When the Lord doth but stretch out his hand, how easily, how effectually will he make them ashamed of their confidence in Egypt, and the Egyptians ashamed of the encouragement they gave them to trust in them; for he that helpeth and he that is helped shall fall together, and their mutual alliance shall prove their joint ruin. The Egyptians were shortly to be reckoned with, as appears by the *burden of Egypt*, chap. xix. and then those who fled to them for shelter and succour should fall with them; for there is no outrunning the judgments of God; *evil pursues sinners*; and it is just with God to make that creature a scourge to us which we make an idol of.

4. They took God's work out of his hands; they pretended a great deal of care to preserve Jerusalem in advising to an alliance with Egypt, and when others would not fall in with their measures, they pleaded self-preservation, and went to Egypt themselves. Now the prophet here tells them that Jerusalem should be preserved without aid from Egypt, and those that tarried there should be safe, when those that fled to Egypt should be ruined. Jerusalem was under God's protection, and therefore there was no occasion to put it under the protection of Egypt: but a practical distrust of God's all-sufficiency is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from him to the creature.

The prophet tells them he had it from God's own mouth, *Thus hath the Lord spoken to me*, we may depend upon it;

1. That God would appear against Jerusalem's enemies with the boldness of a lion over his prey, *ver. 4.* When the lion comes out to seize his prey, a multitude of shepherds come out against him; for it becomes neighbours to help one another, when persons of goods are in danger: These shepherds dare not come near the lion, all they can do is to make a noise, and with that they think to fright him off. But doth he regard it? no, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abate himself so far as to be in the least moved by it, either to quit his prey, or to make any more haste than he otherwise would do in seizing it. *Thus will the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion*, with such an unshaken undaunted resolution; not to be moved by any opposition; and he will as easily and irresistibly destroy the Assyrian army as a lion tears a lamb in pieces. Whoever appears against God, they are but like a multitude of poor simple shepherds shouting at a lion, who scorns to take notice of them, or so much as to alter his pace for them. Sure they that have such a protector need not go to Egypt for help.

2. That God would appear for Jerusalem's friends with the tenderness of a bird over her young, *ver. 5.* God was ready to gather Jerusalem as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, *Matt. xxiii. 37.* but they that trusted to the Egyptians would not. As birds flying to their nests with all possible speed, when they see them attacked, and fluttering about their nests with all possible concern, hovering over their young ones to protect them, and drive away the assailants, with such compassion and affection will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem. As an eagle stirs up her young when they are in danger, takes them and bears them on her wings, so the Lord let Israel out of Egypt, *Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.* and he has now the same tender concern for them that he had then, so that they need not flee into Egypt again for shelter; *Defending he will deliver it*, i. e. he will so defend it as to secure the continuance of its safety; nor defend it for a while, and abandon it at last, but defend it so as it shall not fall into the enemies hand; *I will defend this city to save it*, *Isa. xxxvii. 35.* *Passing over he will preserve it*;

the word for passing over is used in that sense only here and *Erod. xii. 12.* —21—25. concerning the destroying angels passing over the houses of the Israelites when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians, to which story this refers here: the Assyrian army was to be routed by a destroying angel, who should pass over Jerusalem, though that deserved to be destroyed, and draw his sword only against the besiegers; they shall be slain by the pestilence, but none of the besieged shall take the infection. Thus he will again pass over the houses of his people, and secure them.

6. ¶ Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. 7. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. 8. ¶ Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. 9. And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

This explains the foregoing promise of the deliverance of Jerusalem; she shall be fitted for deliverance, and then it shall be wrought for her; for in that method God delivers.

1. Jerusalem shall be reformed, and so she shall be delivered from her enemies within her walls, *ver. 6, 7.* Here is, (1.) A gracious call to repentance: this was the Lord's voice crying in the city, the voice of the rod, the voice of the sword, and the voice of the prophets interpreting the judgment, *Turn ye*, O turn ye now from your evil ways, unto God, return to your allegiance to him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted; from whom you, O children of Israel, have revolted. He minds them of their birth and parentage, that they were children of Israel, and therefore under the highest obligations imaginable to the God of Israel, as an aggravation of their revolt from him, and as an encouragement to them to return to him; they had been backsliding children, yet children, therefore let them return, and their backslidings shall be healed; they have deeply revolted, they thought politically, the revolters are profound, *Hos. x. 2.* but it will prove dangerously; the stain of their sins is gone deep into their nature, not to be easily got out, like the blackness of the Ethiopian, they have deeply corrupted themselves, *Hos. ix. 9.* they have sunk deep into misery, and cannot easily recover themselves; therefore you have need both to hasten and quicken your return to God. (2.) A gracious promise of the good success of this call, *ver. 7.* In that day every man shall cast away his idols, in obedience to Hezekiah's orders, which till they were alarmed by the Assyrian invasion many refused to do. That is a happy fright which frightens us from our sins. It shall be a general reformation, every man shall cast away his own idols; shall begin with them before he undertakes to demolish other peoples' idols, which there will be no need of when every man reforms himself: It shall be a thorough reformation, for they shall part with their idolatry, their beloved sin, with their idols of silver and gold, their idols that they are most fond of. Many make an idol of their silver and gold, and by the love of that are drawn to revolt from God; but those that turn to God cast that away out of their hearts, and will be ready to part with it when God calls. It shall be a reformation upon a right principle, a principle of piety, not of politics: they shall cast away their idols, because they have been unto them for a sin, an occasion of sin; therefore they will have nothing to do with them, though they had been the work of their own hands, and upon that account they had a particular fondness for them. Sin is the work of our own hands, but in working it we have been working our own ruin, and therefore we must cast it away: and those are strangely wedded to it who will not be prevailed with to cast it away, when they see that otherwise they themselves will be cast-aways. Some make this to be only a prediction that those who trust in idols, when they find they stand them in no stead will cast them away in indignation. But it agrees so exactly with *chap. xxx. 22.* that I rather take it as a promise of a sincere reformation.

2. Jerusalem's besiegers shall be routed, and so she shall be delivered from the enemies about their walls; the former makes way for this. If a people return to God, they may leave it to him to plead their cause against their enemies. Then, when they have cast away their idols, then shall the Assyrian fall, *ver. 8, 9.* (1.) The army of the Assyrians shall be laid dead upon the spot, by the sword, not of a mighty man, nor of a mean man, not of any man at all, either Israelite or Egyptian, not forcibly by the sword of a mighty man, not surreptitiously by the sword of a mean man; but by the sword of an angel, who strikes more strangely than a mighty man, and yet more secretly than a mean man; by the sword of the Lord, and his power and wrath in the hand of the angel: thus the young men of the army shall melt and be discomfited, and become tributaries to death. When God has work to do against the enemies of his church, we expect it must be done by mighty men and mean men, officers and common soldiers, whereas God can if he pleaseth to do it without either: He needs not armies of men, that hath legions of angels at command, *Matt. xxvi. 53.* (2.) The king of Assyria shall flee for the same, shall flee from that invisible sword, hoping to get out of the reach of it; and he shall make the best of his way to his own dominions, shall pass over to some strong hold of his own, for fear lest the Jews should pursue him now his army was routed. Sennacherib had been very confident that he should make himself master of Jerusalem, and in the most insolent manner had set both God and Hezekiah at defiance; yet now he is made to tremble for fear of both. God can strike a terror into the proudest of men, and make the stoutest heart to tremble. See *Job xviii. 11.*—*xx. 24.* His princes that accompany him shall be afraid of the ensign, shall be in a continual fright at the remembrance of the ensign in the air, which perhaps the destroying angel displayed before he gave the fatal blow: or they shall be afraid of every ensign they see, suspecting it is a party of the Jews pursuing them. The banner that God displays for the encouragement of his people, *Psal. lx. 4.* will be a terror to his and their enemies. Thus he cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth. But who will do this? It is the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem; i. e. (1.) Whose residence is there, and who there keeps house, as a man doth where his fire and his oven are; it is the city of the great king, and let not the Assyrians think to turn him out of the possession of his own house. (2.) Who is there a consuming fire to all his enemies, and will make them as a fiery oven in the day of his wrath, *Psal. xxi. 9.* he is himself, a wall of fire round about Jerusalem, so that whoever assaults her it is at their peril, *Zech. ii. 5.* *Rev. xi. 5.* (3.) Who has his altar there, on which the holy fire is continually kept burning, and sacrifices daily offered to his honour, and with which he is well pleased: and therefore he will defend this city especially having an eye to the great sacrifice which was there also to be offered, of which all the sacrifices were types. If we keep up the fire of holy love

and devotion in our hearts and houses we may depend upon God to be a protection to us and them.

C H A P. XXXII.

This chapter seems to be such a prophecy of the reign of Hezekiah, as amounts to an abridgement of the history of it, and this with an eye to the kingdom of the Messiah, whose government was typified by the thrones of the house of David: for which reason he is so often called the Son of David: Here is, (1.) A prophecy of that good work of reformation with which he should begin his reign, and the happy influence it should have upon the people, who had been wretchedly corrupted and debauched in the reign of his predecessors, ver. 1—8. (2.) A prophecy of the great disturbance that would be given to the kingdom in the middle of his reign by the Assyrian invasion, ver. 9—14. (3.) A promise of better time afterwards towards the latter end of his reign, in respect both of piety and peace, ver. 15—20. which promise may be supposed to look as far forward as the days of the Messiah.

1. **BEHOLD**, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. 2. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. 3. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim; and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. 4. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. 5. The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. 6. For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practice hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. 7. The instruments also of the churl are evil; he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. 8. But the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand.

We have here the description of a flourishing kingdom; *blest art thou O land*, when it is thus with thee, when kings, princes, and people are in their places such as they should be. It may be taken as a directory both to magistrates and subjects what both ought to do; or as a panegyric to Hezekiah who ruled well, and saw something of the happy effects of his good government: and it was designed to make the people sensible how happy they were under his administration, and how careful they should be to improve the advantages of it, and withal to direct them to look for the kingdom of Christ, and the times of reformation which that kingdom should introduce.

It is here promised and prescribed for the comfort of the church:

1. That magistrates should do their duty in their places, and the powers answer the great ends for which they were ordained of God, ver. 1, 2. (1.) There shall be a king and princes that shall reign and rule; for it cannot go well when there is no king in Israel. The princes must have a king a monarch over them as supreme, in whom they may unite; and the king, must have princes under him as officers, by whom he may act, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. They both shall know their place and fill it up; the king shall reign, and yet without any diminution to his just prerogative, the princes shall rule a lower sphere, and all for the public good. (2.) They shall use their power according to law and not against it; they shall reign in righteousness and in judgment, with wisdom and equity, protecting the good and punishing the bad; and those kings and princes Christ owns as reigning by him who decrees justice, Prov. viii. 15. such a king, such a prince Christ himself is, he reigns by rule, and in righteousness will he judge the world, Isa. ix. 7.—xi. 4. (3.) Thus they shall be great blessings to the people, ver. 2. a man, that man, that king that reigns in righteousness, *shall be as a hiding place*. When princes are as they should be, people are as they would be, (1.) They are sheltered and protected from many mischiefs; this good magistrate is a covert to the subject from the tempest of injury and violence, *defends the poor and fatherless*, that they may not be made a prey of by the mighty. Whither should oppressed innocence flee, when blasted by reproach, or borne down by violence, but to the magistrate as its hiding place? to him it appeals, and by him it is righted. (2.) They are refreshed and comforted with many blessings: this good magistrate gives such countenance to those that are poor and in distress, and such encouragement to every thing that is praise-worthy, that he is rivers of water in a dry place, cooling and cherishing, and making the earth fruitful; and as the shadow of a great rock, under which a poor traveller may shelter himself from the scorching heat of the sun in a weary land. It is a great reviving to a good man that makes conscience of doing his duty, in the midst of contempt and contradiction, at length to be backed, and favoured, and smiled upon in it by a good magistrate. All this and much more the man Christ Jesus is to all the willing faithful subjects of his kingdom. When the greatest evils befall us, not only the wind but the tempest, when storms of guilt and wrath beset us and beat upon us, they drive us to Christ, and in him we are not only safe, but satisfied that we are so: in him we find rivers of waters for them that hunger and thirst after righteousness, all the refreshment and comfort that a needy soul can desire; and the shadow, not of a tree, which sun or rain may beat through, but of a rock, a great rock, which reacheth a great way for the shelter of the traveller. And some observe here, that as the covert, and the hiding-place, and the rock do themselves receive the battering of the wind and storm, to save those from them that shelter in them, so Christ bore the storm himself to keep it off from us.

2. That subjects shall do their duty in their places: 1. They shall be willing to be taught and to understand things aright: shall lay aside their prejudices against their rulers and teachers, and submit to the light and power of truth, ver. 3. When this blessed work of reformation is set on foot, and men do their parts towards it, God will not be wanting to do his: then the eyes of them that see, of the prophets, the seers, shall not be dim; but God will bless them with visions to be by them communicated to the people; and those that read the word written, shall no longer have a veil upon their hearts, but shall see things clearly; then the ears of them that hear the word preached shall hearken diligently, and readily receive what they hear? and not be so dull of hearing as they have been. This shall be done by the grace of God, especially gospel-grace; for the

hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made, hath new made, even both of them.

2. There shall be a wonderful change wrought in them by that which is taught them, ver. 4. (1.) They shall have a clear head, and be able to discern things that differ, and distinguish concerning them. The hearts of those that were hasty and rash, and could not take time to digest and consider things, shall now be cured of their precipitation, and shall understand knowledge, for the Spirit of God will open their understanding; which blessed work Christ wrought in his disciples after his resurrection, Luke xxiv. 45. as a specimen of what he would do for all his in giving them an understanding, 1 John v. 20. The pious designs of good princes are then likely to take effect, when their subjects allow themselves liberty to consider, and to think so freely as to take things right. (2.) They shall have a ready utterance; the tongue of the stammerers, that used to blunder whenever they spoke of the things of God, shall now be ready to speak plainly; as those that understand what they speak of, that believe and therefore speak. There shall be a great increase of such clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge in the things of God, that those from whom one would not have expected it, shall speak intelligently of those things, very much to the honour of God, and the edification of others. Their hearts being full of this good matter, their tongues shall be as the pen of a ready writer, Psal. xlv. 1.

3. The differences between good and evil, virtue and vice, shall be kept up, and no more confounded by those who put darkness for light, and light for darkness, ver. 5. *The vile shall no more be called liberal*; i. e. (1.) Ill men shall no more be preferred by the prince. When a king reigns in justice, he will not put those in places of honour and power that are ill-natured, and of base and sordid spirits, and care not what injury or mischief they do, so they may but compass their own ends. Such are vile persons, as Antiochus is called, Dan. xi. 21. when they are advanced, they are called liberal and bountiful, are called benefactors, Luke xxii. 25. But it shall not always be thus: when the world grows wiser, men shall be preferred according to their merit; and honour, which was never thought seemly for a fool, Prov. xxvi. 1. shall no longer be thrown away upon such. (2.) Ill men shall be no more had in reputation among the people, nor vice disguised with the colours of virtue. It shall no more be said to Nabal, Thou art Nadib, (so the words are) such a covetous muck worm as Nabal was, a fool but for his money, shall not be complimented with the title of a gentleman or a prince: neither shall they call a churl, that minds none but himself, doth no good with what he has, but is an unprofitable burden of the earth, they shall not call him my lord; or rather they shall not say of him, he is rich, for so the word signifies; those only are to be reckoned rich that are rich in good works; not that have abundance, but that use it well. In short, it is well with a people when men are generally valued by their virtue and usefulness and beneficence to mankind, and not by their wealth or titles of honour. Whether this was fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah, and how far it refers to the kingdom of Christ, in which we are sure men are judged of by what they are, not by what they have, nor is any man's character mistaken, we will not say; but it prescribes an excellent rule both to prince and people, to respect men according to their personal merit.

And to enforce this rule, here is a description both of the vile person and of the liberal; and by it we shall see such a vast difference between them, that we must quite forget ourselves if we pay that respect to the vile person and to the churl, which is due only to the liberal.

1. A vile person and a churl will do mischief, and the more if he be preferred and have powers in his hand; his honours will make him worse, and not better, ver. 6, 7. See the character of these base ill-conditioned men. (1.) They are always plotting some unjust thing or other, designing ill either to particular persons or to the public, and contriving how to bring it about; and so many silly piques they have to gratify, and mean revenges, that there appears not in them the least spark of generosity; their hearts will be still working some iniquity or other. Observe, There is the work of the heart, as well as the work of the hands: as thoughts are words to God, so designs are works in his account. See what pains sinners take in sin; they labour in it, their hearts are intent upon it, and with a great deal of art and application, they work iniquity. They devise wicked devices with all the subtlety of the old serpent and a great deal of deliberation, which makes the sin exceeding sinful; for the more there is of plot and management in a sin, the more there is of Satan in it. (2.) They carry on their plots by trick and dissimulation: when they are meditating iniquity, they practice hypocrisy, feign themselves just men, Luke xx. 20. The most abominable mischiefs shall be disguised with the most plausible pretences of devotion to God, regard to man, and concern for some common good. Those are the vilest of men that intend the worst mischiefs when they speak fair. (3.) They speak villainy. When they are in a passion, you will see what they are by the base ill language they give to those about them, which no way becomes men of rank and honour: or in giving verdict or judgment, they villainously put false colours upon things to pervert justice. (4.) They affront God, who is a righteous God, and loveth righteousness; they utter error against the Lord, and therein they practice profaneness; for so the word signifies which we translate hypocrisy. They give an unjust sentence, and then profanely make use of the name of God for the ratification of it: as if because the judgment is God's (Deut. i. 17.) therefore their false and unjust judgment was his; this is uttering error against the Lord, under pretence of uttering truth and justice for him; and nothing can be more impudently done against God, than to patronize wickedness with his name. (5.) They abuse mankind, those particularly whom they are bound to protect and relieve. (1.) Instead of supplying the wants of the poor, they impoverish them, they make empty the soul of the hungry, either taking away the food they have, or which is almost equivalent, denying the supply they want, and which they have to give. And they cause the drink of the thirsty to fail, i. e. they cut off the relief they used to have, though they need it as much as ever. Those are vile persons indeed that rob the spital. (2.) Instead of righting the poor when they appeal to their judgment, they contrive to destroy the poor, to ruin them in their courts of judicature with lying words in favour of the rich, to whom they are plainly partial; yea, though the needy speak right, though the evidence be never so full for them to make out the equity of their cause, it is the bribe that governs them, not the right. Lastly, these churls and vile persons have always ill instruments about them, that are ready to serve their villainous purposes, *all their servants are wicked*; there is no design so palpably unjust, but there may be found those that would be employed as tools to put it in execution. *The instruments of the churl are evil*, and one cannot expect otherwise; but this is our comfort, that they can do no more mischiefs than God permits them.

2. One that truly is liberal and deserves the honour of being called so, makes it his business to do good to every body, according as his sphere is, ver. 8. Observe, (1.) The care he takes, and the contrivance he hath to do good. He deviseth liberal things; as much as the churl or niggard projects how to save and lay up what he hath for himself only, so much the good charitable man projects how to use and lay out what he has in the best manner for the good of others. Charity must be directed by wisdom, and liberal things done prudently and with device, that the good intention of them may be answered, that it may not be charity misplaced. The liberal man, when he has done all the liberal things that are in his own power, deviseth liberal

liberal things for others to do according to their power, and puts them upon doing them. (2.) The comfort he takes, and the advantage he hath in doing good: by liberal things he shall stand or be established. The providence of God will reward him for his liberality with a settled prosperity and an established reputation. The grace of God will give him abundance of satisfaction and confirmed peace in his own bosom; what toiles others shall not disturb him, his heart is fixed. This is the recompence of charity, *Psal. cxlv. 5, 6.* Some read it, the prince or honourable man, will take honourable courses; and by such honourable or ingenious courses he shall stand or be established. It is well with a land when the honourable of it are indeed men of honour, and scorn to do a base thing; when its king is thus the son of nobles.

9. ¶ Rise up, ye women that are at ease: hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. 10. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. 11. Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones: strip you and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. 12. They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. 13. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: 14. Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left: the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; 14. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. 16. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. 17. And the work of righteousness shall be peace: and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. 18. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places; 19. When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place. 20. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.

In these verses we have God rising up to judgment against the vile persons to punish them for their villany: but at length returning in mercy to the liberal, to reward them for their liberality.

1. When there was so great a corruption of manners, and so much provocation given to the holy God, bad times might well be expected, and here is a warning given of such times coming. The alarm is sounded to the women that were at ease, ver. 9. and the careless daughters, to feed whose pride, vanity, and luxury, their husbands and fathers were tempted to starve the poor. Let them hear what the prophet has to say to them in God's name; *Rise up and hear* with reverence and attention.

(1.) Let them know that God was about to bring wasting desolating judgments upon the land in which they lived in pleasure and were wanton. This seems to refer primarily to the desolations made by Sennacherib's army, when he seized all the fenced cities of Judah: but then those words, *many days and years*, must be rendered as the margin reads them, *days above a year*, i. e. something above a year shall this havoc be in the making; so long it was from the first entrance of that army into the land of Judah, to the overthrow of it. But it is applicable to the wretched disappointment which they will certainly meet with, first or last, that set their hearts upon the world and place their happiness in it; *Ye shall be troubled, ye careless women.*

It will not secure us from trouble to cast away care when we are at ease; nay, to those who affect to live carelessly, even little troubles will be great vexations, and press hard upon them. They were careless and at ease, because they had money enough and mirth enough; but the prophet here tells them, (1.) That the country whence they had their rents and dainties, should shortly be laid waste; the vintage should fail, and then what we will ye do for wine to make merry with? the gathering of fruits shall not come, for there shall be none to be gathered, and you will find the want of them, ver. 10. You will want the teats, the good milk from the cows, or pleasant fields and their products; the useful fields that are serviceable to human life, are the pleasant ones; you will want the fruitful vine, and the grapes it used to yield you. The abuse of plenty is justly punished with scarcity; and they deserve to be deprived of the supports of life, who made them the food and fuel of lust, and prepared them for Baal. (2.) That the cities too, the cities of Judah, where they lived at ease, spent their rents, and made themselves merry with their dainties, should be laid waste too, ver. 13, 14. *Briers and thorns*, the fruits of sin and the curse shall come up; not only upon the land of my people, which lie uncultivated, but upon all the houses of joy; the play-houses, the gaming houses, the taverns in the joyous cities. When a foreign army was ravaging the country, the houses of joy no doubt became houses of mourning; then the palaces or noblemen's houses were forsaken by their owners, who perhaps fled to Egypt for refuge; the multitude of the city were left by their leaders to shift for themselves. Then the stately houses shall be for dens for ever, which had been as forts and towers for strength and magnificence; they shall be abandoned, the owners shall never return to them, every body shall look upon them to be like Jericho, an anathema; so that even when peace returns they shall not be rebuilt, but shall be thrown to the waste; *a joy of wild asses, and a pasture of flocks.* Thus is many a house brought to ruin by sin; *Jam sages est ubi Troja fuit.*

(2.) In the foresight of this let them tremble and be troubled, strip them and gird sackcloth upon their loins, ver. 11. This intimates not only that, when the calamity comes, they shall thus be made to tremble and be forced to strip themselves, that then God's judgment would strip them and make them bare. But, (1.) That the best prevention of the trouble would be to repent and humble themselves for their sin, and lie in the dust before God in true remorse and godly sorrow, which would be lengthening out of their tranquillity. This is meeting God in the way of his judgments, and saving a correction by correcting our own mistakes; those only shall break that will not bend. (2.) That the best preparation for the trouble would be to deny themselves and live a life of mortification, and to sit loose to all the delights of sense. Those that have already by a holy contempt of this world stripped themselves, can easily bear to be stripped when trouble and death comes.

2. While there was still a remnant that kept their integrity, they had reason to hope for good times at length, and such times the prophet here gives

them a pleasant prospect of. Such times they saw in the latter end of the reign of Hezekiah; but the prophecy may well be supposed to look further to the days of the Messiah, who is King of righteousness and King of peace, and to whom all the prophets bear witness. Now observe,

1. How those blessed times shall be introduced; by the pouring out of the Spirit from on high, ver. 15. which speaks not only of the good will of God towards us, but the good work of God in us; for then, and not till then, there will be good times, when God by his grace gives men good hearts; and therefore God's giving his holy Spirit to them that ask him, is in effect his giving them all good things, as appears by comparing *Luke xi. 13.* with *Matt. vii. 11.* This is the great thing that God's people comfort themselves with the hopes of, that the Spirit shall be poured out upon them, that there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace than formerly, according as the necessity of the church in its desolate state calls for. This comes from on high, and therefore they look up to their Father in heaven for it. When God designs favours for his church, he pours out his Spirit both to prepare his people to receive his favours, and to qualify those whom he designs to employ as instruments of his favour, and gives them success; for their endeavours to repair the desolations of the church are all fruitless until the Spirit be poured out upon them, and then the work is done suddenly. The kingdom of the Messiah was brought in and set up by the pouring out of the Spirit, *Acts ii.* and so it is still kept up, and will be to the end.

2. What a wonderful happy change shall then be made: that which was a wilderness, dry and barren, shall become a fruitful field, and that which we now reckon a fruitful field, in comparison with what it shall be then, shall be counted for rest; *Then shall the earth yield her increase.* It is promised, that in the days of the Messiah the fruit of the earth shall shake like Lebanon, *Psal. lxxii. 16.* Some apply this to the admission of the Gentiles into the gospel church, which made the wilderness a fruitful field; and the rejection and exclusion of the Jews, which made that a forest which had been a fruitful field; on the Gentiles was poured out a Spirit of life, but on the Jews a Spirit of slumber. See what is the evidence and effect of the pouring out of the Spirit upon any soul; it is thereby made fruitful and has its fruit unto holiness. Three things go to make these times happy.

1. Judgment and righteousness, ver. 16. When the Spirit is poured out upon a land, then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and turn it into a fruitful field; and righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field, and make it yet more fruitful: ministers shall expound the law, and magistrates execute it; and both so judiciously and faithfully, that by both the bad shall be made good, and the good made better, among all sorts of people, the poor, and low, and unlearned, that are neglected as the wilderness; and the rich, and great, and learned that are valued as the fruitful field; there shall be right thoughts of things, good principles commanding, and conscience made good and evil, sin and duty: or in all parts of the land, both champaign and enclosed, country and city, the ruder parts and those that are more cultivated and refined, justice shall be duly administered. The law of Christ introduceth a judgment or rule by which we must be governed; and the gospel of Christ a righteousness by which we must be saved: and wherever the Spirit is poured out, both these dwell and remain as an everlasting righteousness.

2. Peace and quietness, ver. 17, 18. This of two kinds:

(1.) *Inward peace*, ver. 17. This follows upon the indwelling of righteousness, ver. 16. Those in whom that work is wrought, shall experience this blessed product of it. It is itself peace, and the effect of it, *quietness and assurance for ever*; i. e. a holy serenity and security of mind, by which the soul enjoys itself and enjoys its God, and it is not in the power of this world to disturb it in those enjoyments. Note, Peace, and quietness, and everlasting assurance may be expected, and shall be found in the way and work of righteousness. True satisfaction is to be had only in true religion, and there it is to be had without fail. Those are the quiet and peaceable lives that are lived in *all godliness and honesty*, 1 Tim. ii. 2. (1.) *Even the work of righteousness shall be peace*, even in the doing of our duty we shall find abundance of true pleasure, a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Though the work of righteousness may be toilsome and costly, and expose us to contempt; yet it is peace, such peace as is sufficient to bear our charges. (2.) *The effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance* not only to the end of time, of our time, and in the end; but to the endless ages of eternity. Real holiness is real happiness now, and shall be perfect happiness, that is perfect holiness for ever.

(2.) *Outward peace*, ver. 18. It is a great mercy when those who by the grace of God have quiet and peaceable spirits, are by the providence of God made to dwell in quiet and peaceable habitations; not disturbed in their houses or solemn assemblies. When the terror of Sennacherib's invasion was over, the people, no doubt, were more sensible than ever of the mercy of a quiet habitation: not disturbed with the alarms of war. Let every family study to keep itself quiet from strifes and jars within; not two against three, and three against two in the house; and then put itself under God's protection to dwell safely, and to be quiet from the fear of evil without. Jerusalem shall be a peaceable habitation, compare chap. xxxiii. 20. even when it shall hail, and there shall be a violent battering storm coming down on the forest that lies bleak, then shall Jerusalem be a quiet resting-place, for the city shall be low in a low place, under the wind, not exposed, as those cities are that stand high, to the fury of the storm; but sheltered by the mountains that are round about Jerusalem, *Psal. cxxv. 2.* The high forts and towers are brought down, ver. 14. But the city that lies low shall be a quiet resting-place. Those are most safe and may dwell most at ease that are humble, and are willing to dwell low, ver. 19. Those that would dwell in a peaceable habitation, must be willing to dwell low and in a low place.

Some think here is an allusion to the preservation of the land of Goshen from the plague of hail which made great destruction in the land of Egypt.

3. Plenty and abundance: there shall be such good crops gathered in every where and every year, that the husbandmen shall be commended and thought happy, who sow beside all waters, ver. 20. that sow all the grounds that are fit for seedness, that cast their bread, or bread corn, upon the waters, *Ecclef. xi. 1.* God will give the increase, but then the husbandman must be industrious and mind his business, and sow beside all waters; which if he do the corn shall come up so thick and rank, that he shall turn in his cattle, even the ox and the ass, to eat the tops of it and keep it under. This is applicable, (1.) To the preaching of the word: some think it points at the ministry of the apostles, who as husbandmen went forth to sow their seed, *Matt. xiii. 3.* and they sowed beside all waters: they preached the gospel wherever they came; waters signify people, and they preached to multitudes: wherever they found men's hearts softened, and moistened, and disposed to receive the word, they cast in the good seed. And whereas by the law of Moses the Jews were forbidden to plough with an ox and an ass, *Deut. xxii. 10.* which intimated that Jews and Gentiles shall not intermix; now that distinction shall be taken away, and both the ox and the ass, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be employed in, and enjoy the benefit of the gospel husbandry. (2.) To works of charity, when God sends these happy times blessed are they that improve them in doing good with what they have; that sow beside all waters, that embrace all opportunities of relieving the necessitous; for in due season they shall reap.

C H A P. XXXIII.

This chapter relates to the same events with the foregoing: The distress of Judah and Jerusalem by Sennacherib's invasion, and their deliverance out of that distress by the destruction of the Assyrian army. These are intermixed in the prophecy, in the way of a pindaric. Observe. (1.) The great distress that Judah and Jerusalem should then be brought into, ver. 7, 8, 9. (2.) The particular frights which the sinners in Zion should then be in, ver. 13, 14. (3.) The prayers of good people to God in this distress, ver. 2. (4.) The holy security which they should enjoy in the midst of this trouble, ver. 15, 16. (5.) The destruction of the army of the Assyrians, ver. 1—3. in which God would be greatly glorified, ver. 5—10, 11, 12. (6.) The enriching of the Jews with the spoils of the Assyrian camp, ver. 4—23, 24. (7.) The happy settlement of Jerusalem and the Jewish state upon this: Religion shall be uppermost, ver. 6, and their civil state shall flourish, ver. 17—23. This was soon fulfilled, but it is written for our learning.

1. **W**OE to thee that spoilest; and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. 2. O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. 3. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nation were scattered. 4. And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar; as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them. 5. The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. 6. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure. 7. Behold their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. 8. The high-ways lie waste, the way-faring man ceaseth; he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man. 9. The earth mourneth and languished; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits. 10. Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. 11. Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble; your breath as fire shall devour you. 12. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

Here is, 1. The proud and false Assyrian justly reckoned with for all this fraud and violence, and laid under a woe, ver. 1. Observe, (1.) The sin which the enemy had been guilty of: he had spoiled the people of God, and made a prey of them, and herein had broken his treaty of peace with them, and dealt treacherously. Truth and mercy are two such sacred things, and have so much of God in them, that those cannot but be under the wrath of God that make conscience of neither; but are perfectly lost to both, that care not what mischief they do, what spoil they make, what dissimulations they are guilty of, nor what solemn engagements they violate to compass their own wicked designs. Bloody and deceitful men are the worst of men. (2.) The aggravation of this sin; he spoiled those that had never done him any injury, and that he had no pretence to quarrel with; and dealt treacherously with those that had always dealt faithfully with him. Note, The less provocation we have from men to do an ill thing, the more provocation we give to God by it. (3.) The punishment he should fall under for this sin. He that spoiled the cities of Judah shall have his own army destroyed by an angel, and his camp plundered by those whom he had made a prey of. The Chaldeans shall deal treacherously with the Assyrians and revolt from them. Two of Sennacherib's own sons shall deal treacherously with him and basely murder him at his devotions. Note, The righteous God often pays sinners in their own coin. *He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity*, Rev. xiii. 10.—xviii. 6. (4.) The time when he shall be thus dealt with; when he shall make an end to spoil, and to deal treacherously; not by repentance and reformation, that might prevent his ruin, Dan. iv. 27, but when he shall have done his worst, when he shall have gone as far as God would permit him to go, to the utmost of his tetter, then the cup of trembling shall be put into his hand. When he shall have arrived to his full stature in impiety, shall have filled up the measure of his iniquity, then all shall be called over again; when he has done God will begin, for his day is coming.

2. The praying people of God earnest at the throne of grace for mercy for the land now in its distress, ver. 2. O Lord be merciful to us, men are cruel, be thou gracious; we have deserved thy wrath, but we intreat thy favour; and if we find thee propitious to us, we are happy; the trouble we are in cannot hurt us, shall not ruin us. It is in vain to expect relief from creatures, we have no confidence in the Egyptians; but we have waited for thee only, resolving to submit to thee, whatever the issue of the trouble be, and hoping that it shall be a comfortable issue. Those that by faith humbly wait for God, shall certainly find him gracious to them. They pray, (1.) For those that were employed in military services for them; *be thou their arm every morning*; Hezekiah and his princes, and all the men of war need continual supplies of strength and courage from thee; supply their need therefore, and be to them a God all-sufficient. Every morning, when they go forth upon the business of the day, and perhaps have new work to do, and new difficulties to encounter, let them be afresh animated and invigorated, and as the day so let the strength be. In our spiritual warfare our own hands are not sufficient for us, nor can we bring any thing to pass unless God not only strengthen our arms, Gen. xlix. 24. but be himself our arm; so entirely do we depend upon him as our arm every morning, so constantly do we depend upon his power, as well as his compassions, which are new every morning, Lam. iii. 23. If God leaves us to ourselves any morning we are undone: we must therefore every morning commit ourselves to him, and go forth in his strength to do the work of its day in its day. (2.) For the body of the people; *be thou our salvation also in the time of trouble*; ours that sit still and do not venture into the high places of the field. They depend upon God not only as their Saviour to work deliverance for them, but as their salvation itself; for whatever becomes of their

secular interests, they will reckon themselves safe and saved if they have him for their God. If he undertake to be their Saviour, he will be their salvation; for as for God his work is perfect. Some read it thus; *thou who wast their arm every morning*, who wast the continual strength and help of our fathers before us; *be thou our salvation also in time of trouble*; help us as thou helpedst them; they looked unto thee and were lightened, Psalm xxiv. 5. let us then not walk in darkness.

3. The Assyrian army ruined, and their camp made a rich but cheap and easy prey to Judah and Jerusalem. No sooner is the prayer made, ver. 2. but it is answered, ver. 3, nay it is out-done. They prayed that God would save them from their enemies; but he doth more than that; he gives them victory over their enemies, and abundant cause to triumph; for, (1.) The strength of the Assyrian camp is broken, ver. 3. when the destroying angel slew so many thousands of them; at the noise of the tumult, of the shrieks of the dying men, who we may suppose did not die silently, the rest of the people fled, and shifted every one for his own safety: when God did thus lift up himself, the several nations or clans of which the army was composed, were scattered. It was time to stir when such an unprecedented plague broke out among them. When God ariseth, his enemies are scattered, Psal. lxxviii. 1. (2.) The spoil of the Assyrian camp is seized by way of reprisal, for all the desolations of the defenced cities of Judah, ver. 4. *your spoil shall be gathered*, by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, like the gathering of the caterpillar, and as the running to and fro of locusts; i. e. the spoilers shall as easily and as quickly make themselves masters of the riches of the Assyrians, as an host of caterpillars and locusts made a field or a tree bare. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and Israel enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians. Some make the Assyrians to be the caterpillars and locusts, which when they are killed are gathered together in heaps, as the frogs of Egypt, and are run upon and trodden to dirt.

4. God and his Israel glorified and exalted hereby: When the spoil of the enemy is thus gathered; (1.) God will have the praise of it, ver. 5. *The Lord is exalted*; it is his honour thus to abase proud men, and hide them in the dust together: thus he magnifies his own name, and his people give him the glory of it, as Israel when the Egyptians were drowned, Exod. xv. 1, 2, &c. He is exalted as one that dwelleth on high, high out of the reach of their blasphemies, and that has an over-ruling power over them, and wherein they deal proudly, delights to shew himself above them; who doth what he will, and they cannot resist him. (2.) His people will have the blessing of it: When God lifts up himself to scatter the nations that are in confederacy against Jerusalem, ver. 3. then as a preparative for that, or as the fruit and product of it, he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness; not only with a sense of justice, but with a zeal for it, and an universal care that it be duly administered: It shall again be called, *The city of righteousness*, Isa. i. 26. In this the grace of God is exalted, as much as his providence was in the destruction of the Assyrian army. We may conclude God has mercy in store for a people when he fills them with judgment and righteousness, when all sorts of people, and all their actions and affairs are governed by them, and they are full of them, that no other considerations can crowd in to sway them against these. Hezekiah and his people are encouraged; ver. 6. with an assurance that God would stand by them in their distress. Here is, (1.) A gracious promise of God for them, to stay themselves upon; *Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation*: Here is a desirable end proposed, and that is the stability of our times; that things be not disturbed and unhinged at home, and the strength of salvation, deliverance from and success against enemies abroad: The salvation that God ordains for his people hath strength in it, it is a horn of salvation. And here is the way and mean for obtaining this end, *wisdom and knowledge*; not only piety but prudence: That is it which by the blessing of God will be the stability of our times, and the strength of our salvation: That wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, and which sacrifices private interest to a public good; such prudence as this will establish truth and peace, and fortify the bulwarks in defence of them. (2.) A pious maxim of state for Hezekiah and his people to govern themselves by; *The fear of the Lord is his treasure*. It is God's treasure in the world, from which he receives his tribute; or rather, it is the prince's treasure: A good prince accounts it so, that wisdom is better than gold, and he shall find it so. Note, True religion is true treasure of any prince or people; it denominates them rich. Those places that have plenty of Bibles and ministers, and serious good people, are really rich; and it contributes to that which makes a nation rich in this world; it is therefore the interest of a people to support religion among them, and take heed of every thing that threatens to hinder it.

5. The great distress that Jerusalem was brought into described; that they who believed the prophet might know before-hand what troubles were coming, and might provide accordingly: And that when the foregoing promise of their deliverance should have its accomplishment, the remembrance of the extremity of their case might help to magnify God in it, and make them the more thankful, ver. 7, 8, 9. It is here foretold, (1.) That the enemy would be very insolent and abusive, and there would be no dealing with him; either by treaties of peace, for he hath broken the covenant, and never struck at it, as if it were below him to be a servant to his word: Or by the preparations of war, for he hath despised the cities; scorns to take notice either of their appeals to justice, or of their petition for mercy. He makes himself masters of them so easily, though they are called fenced cities, and meets with so little resistance that he despiseth them: And hath no relentings when he puts all to the sword, for he regardeth no man; hath no pity or concern, no not for those that he is under particular obligations to. He neither fears God nor regards man; but is haughty and imperious to every one. There are those that take a pride in trampling upon all mankind, and have neither veneration for the honourable, nor compassion for the miserable. (2.) That therefore he would not be brought to any terms of reconciliation: *The valiant ones of Jerusalem* being unable to make their parts good with him, must be contentedly run down with noise and insolence, which will make them cry without, because they cannot serve their country as they might have done against a fair adversary. The ambassadors sent by Hezekiah to treat of peace, finding him so haughty and unmanageable, shall weep bitterly for vexation at the disappointment they had met with in their negotiations: they shall weep like children, as despairing to find out any expedient to pacify him. (3.) That the country shall be made quite desolate for a time by his army; (1.) No man durst travel the roads; so that a stop was put to trade and commerce, and (which was worse) no man could safely go up to Jerusalem to keep the solemn feasts: *The high-ways lie waste*: While the fields lie waste, trodden like the highways, the highways lie waste untrodden like the fields, for the traveller ceaseth. (2.) No man had any profits from the grounds, ver. 9. The earth used to rejoice in its own products for the service of God's Israel, but now the enemies of Israel eat them up or tread them down: it mourns and languisheth, the country looks melancholy, and the country people have misery in their countenances: wanting necessary food for themselves and their families; the wonted joy of harvest is turned into lamentation, so withering and uncertain are all worldly joys. The desolation is universal. That part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes was already laid waste; Lebanon famed for cedars, Sharon for roses, Bashan for cattle, Carmel for corn, all very fruitful, are now

now become like wildernesses; are ashamed to be called by their old names, they are to unlike what they were. They shake off their fruits before their time into the hand of the spoiler, which used to be gathered seasonably by the hand of the owner.

6. God appearing at length in his glory against this proud invader, *ver. 10, 11, 12.* When things are brought thus to the last extremity, (1.) God will magnify himself: he had seemed to sit by as an unconcerned spectator: but now will I arise, said the Lord: now will I appear and act, and therein I will be not only evidenced, but exalted: he will not only demonstrate, that there is a God that judgeth in the earth, but that he is a God over all, and higher than the highest. Now will I lift up myself, will prepare for action, will act vigorously, and will be glorified in it. God's time to appear for his people, is when their affairs are reduced to the lowest ebb; *When their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left,* Deut. xxxviii. 36. When all other helpers fail, then is God's time to help. (2.) He will bring down the Assyrian: You (O Assyrians!) are big with hopes that you shall have all the wealth of Jerusalem for your own, and are in pain till it be so: but all your hopes shall come to nothing: You shall receive chaff, and bring forth stubble: which is not only worthless and good for nothing, but combustible and proper fuel for the fire, which it cannot escape when your own breath as fire shall devour you; i. e. The breath of God's wrath provoked against you by the breath of your sins. Your malignant breath, the threatenings and slaughter you breathe out against the people of God; this shall devour you, and your blasphemous breath against God and his name: God would make their own tongues to fall upon them, and their own breath to blow the fire that should consume them. And then no wonder that the people are, as the burning of lime in a lime kiln, all on fire together; and as thorns cut up, which are dried and withered, and therefore easily take fire, and are soon burnt out. Such was the destruction of the Assyrian army; it was like the burning up of thorns which can well be spared, or the burning of lime, which makes it good for something. The burning of that army enlightened the world with the knowledge of God's power, and make his name shine bright.

13. ¶ Hear ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. 14. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire; who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? 15. He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; 16. He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. 17. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. 18. Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers? 19. Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people deeper of speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand. 20. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. 21. But there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. 22. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us: 23. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey. 24. And the inhabitant shall not say I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

Here is a preface that commands attention; and it is fit all should attend, both near and far off, when God speaks, and to what God acts, *ver. 13.* Hear ye that are far off, whether in place or time. Let distant regions and future ages hear what God has done. They do so; they will do so from the scripture with as much assurance as those that were near; the neighbouring nations and those that lived then. But whoever hears what God has done, whether near or afar off, let them acknowledge his might that it is irresistible, and that he can do every thing. Those are very stupid, who hear what God has done, and yet will not acknowledge his might.

Now what is it that God has done which we must take notice of, and in which we must acknowledge his might?

1. He hath struck a terror upon the sinners in Zion: *ver. 14.* Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: There are sinners in Zion, hypocrites that enjoy Zion's privileges, and concur in Zion's services, but their hearts are not right in the sight of God: They keep up secret haunts of sin under the cloke of a visible profession, which convicts them of hypocrisy. And sinners in Zion will have a great deal to answer for above other sinners; and their place in Zion will be so far from being their security, that it will aggravate both their sin and punishment. Now those sinners in Zion, though always subject to secret frights and terrors, were struck with a more than ordinary consternation, from the convictions of their own consciences: (1.) When they saw the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem, and ready to set fire to it, and lay it in ashes; and burn the wasps in the nest; finding they could not make their escape to Egypt, as some had done, and distrustful the promises God had made by his prophets that he would deliver them, they were at the wits end, and ran about like men distracted, crying, *Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire?* Let us therefore abandon the city, and shift for ourselves elsewhere; one had as good live in everlasting burnings as live here: *Who will stand up for us against this devouring fire?* So some read it. See here how the sinners in Zion are affected when the judgments of God are abroad; while they were only threatened they flighted them and made nothing of them; but when they come to be executed they run into the other extreme, then they magnify them and make the worst of

them; they call them devouring fire and everlasting burnings, and despair of relief and succour. Those that rebel against the commands of the word, cannot take the comforts of it in a time of need. Or rather, (2.) When they saw the Assyrian army destroyed; for the destruction of that is the fire spoken of immediately before, *ver. 11, 12.* When the sinners in Zion saw what dreadful execution the wrath of God made, they were in a great fright, being conscious to themselves that they had provoked this God by their secret worshipping of other gods; and therefore they cry out, *Who among us shall dwell with this devouring fire?* before which so vast an army is as thorns. *Who among us shall dwell with these everlasting burnings?* which have made the Assyrians as the burning of lime, *ver. 12.* Thus they said or should have said. Note, God's judgments upon the enemies of Zion, should strike a terror upon the sinners in Zion, nay David himself trembles at them, *Psal. cxix. 120.* God himself is this devouring fire, *Heb. xii. 29.* Who is able to stand before him, 1 Sam. vi. 20. His wrath will burn those everlastingly that have made themselves fuel for it; it is a fire that shall never be quenched, nor will never go out of itself; for it is the wrath of an everlasting God, preying upon the conscience of an immortal soul: And the most daring sinners cannot bear up against it; cannot bear either the execution of it, or the fearful expectation of it. Let this awaken us all to fly from the wrath to come, by flying to Christ as our refuge.

2. He hath graciously provided for the security of his people that trust in him; *Hear this, and acknowledge his power* in making those that walk righteously, and speak uprightly, to dwell on high, *ver. 15, 16.* We have here,

(1.) The good man's character, which he preserves even in times of common iniquity: In divers instances, 1. He walks righteously; i. e. in the whole course of his conversation he acts by rules of equity, and makes conscience of rendering to all their due: to God his due, as well as to men theirs. His walk is righteousness itself, he would not for a world wilfully do an unjust thing. (2.) He speaks uprightly; uprightly, to the word is; he speaks what is true and right, and with an honest intention. He cannot think one thing and speak another; nor look one way and row another. His word is to him as sacred as his oath, and is not yea and nay. (3.) He is so far from coveting ill-got gain, that he despiseth it; thinks it a mean and sordid thing, and unbecoming a man of honour to enrich himself by any hardship put upon his neighbour. He seems to do an ill thing, nay to do a severe thing though he might get by it. He doth not overvalue gain itself, and therefore easily abhors the gain that is not honestly come by. (4.) If he have a bribe at any time thrust into his hand to prevent justice, he shakes his hand from holding it, with the utmost detestation, taking it as an affront to have it offered him. (5.) He stops his ears from hearing any thing that tends to cruelty or bloodshed, or any suggestions stirring him up to revenge, *Job xxvi. 31.* He turns a deaf ear to those that delight in war, and entice him to cast in his lot among them, *Prov. i. 14—16.* (6.) He shuts his eyes from seeing evil: He hath such an abhorrence of sin, that he cannot bear to see others commit it, and doth himself watch against all the occasions of it. Those that would preserve the purity of their souls, must keep a strict guard upon the senses of their bodies; stop their ears to temptations, and turn away their eyes from beholding vanity.

(2.) The good man's comfort, which he may preserve even in times of common calamity, *ver. 16.* (1.) He shall be safe, he shall escape the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings; He shall have access to and communion with that God who is a devouring fire, but shall be to him a rejoicing light. And as to present troubles, he shall dwell on high, out of the reach of them, nay, out of the hearing of the noise of them; he shall not be really harmed by them, nay he shall not be greatly frightened at them; *The floods of great waters shall not come nigh him;* or if they should attack him, his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks, strong and impregnable, fortified by nature as well as art. The divine power will keep him safe, and his faith in that power will keep him easy. God, the rock of ages, will be his high tower. (2.) He shall be supplied, he shall want nothing that is necessary for him: *Bread shall be given him,* even when the siege is straitest, and provisions are cut off; and *his waters shall be sure.* i. e. he shall be sure of the continuance of them, so that he shall not drink his water by measure, and with astonishment: They that fear the Lord, shall not want any thing that is good for them.

3. He will protect Jerusalem, and deliver it out of the hands of the invaders. This storm that threatened them should blow over, and they should enjoy a prosperous state again. Many instances are given of this;

1. Hezekiah shall put off his sackcloth, and all the sadness of his countenance and shall appear publicly in his beauty, in his royal robes, and with a pleasing aspect, *ver. 17.* to the great joy of all his loving subjects. Those that walk uprightly, shall not only have bread given them, and their water sure, but they shall with an eye of faith see the King of kings in his beauty; the beauty of holiness, and the beauty shall be upon him.

2. The siege being raised by which they were kept close within the walls of Jerusalem, they shall now be at liberty to go abroad upon business or pleasure, without danger of falling into the enemies hand; and they shall behold the land that is very far off, they shall visit the utmost corners of the nation, and take a prospect of the adjacent countries, which will be the more pleasant after so long a confinement. And believers behold the heavenly Canaan, that land that is very far off, and comfort themselves with the prospect of it in evil times.

3. The remembrance of the fright they were in shall add to the pleasure of their deliverance, *ver. 18.* Thine heart shall meditate error, meditate it with pleasure when it is over. Thou shalt think thou still hearest the alarm in thine ears, when all the cry was Arm, arm, arm, every man to his post; where is the scribe or secretary of war? let him appear to draw up the muster-roll; where is the receiver and pay-master of the army? let him see what he has in bank, to defray the charge of a defence; where is he that counted the towers, let him bring in the account of them, that care may be taken to put a competent number of men in each. Or these words may be taken as Jerusalem's triumph over the vanquished army of the Assyrians, and the rather because the apostle alludes to them in his triumphs over the learning of this world, when it was baffled by the gospel of Christ, *1 Cor. i. 20.* The virgin, the daughter of Zion, despiseth all their military preparations; where is the scribe, or muster-master of the Assyrian army? Where is their weigher? or treasurer, and where their engineers that counted their towers? they are all either dead or fled. There is an end of them.

4. They shall no more be terrified with the sight of the Assyrian, who were a fierce people naturally, and were particularly fierce against the people of the Jews; and were of a strange language, that could neither understand their petitions or complaints, and therefore had a pretence to be deaf to them, nor could themselves be understood; they are of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive, which will make them the more formidable, *ver. 19.* Thine eyes shall no more see them thus fierce, but their countenances changed when they are all become dead corpses.

5. They shall no more be under apprehensions of the dangers of Jerusalem, Zion, and the temple there, *ver. 20. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities*: the city where our solemn, sacred feasts are kept, where we used to meet to worship God in religious assemblies. The good people among them in the time of their distress were most in pain for Zion upon this account, that it was the city of their solemnities, that the conquerors would burn their temple, and they should not have that to keep their solemn feasts in any more, in times of public danger our concern should be most about our religion, and the cities of our solemnities should be dearer to us than either our strong cities or our store-cities. And it is with an eye to this that God will work deliverance for Jerusalem, because it is the city of religious solemnities: let those be conscientiously kept up, as the glory of a people, and we may depend upon God to create a defence upon that glory. Two things are here promised to Jerusalem; (1.) A well grounded security: It shall be a quiet habitation for the people of God, they shall not be molested and disturbed as they have been, by the alarms of the sword either of war or persecution, *chap. xxix. 20.* It shall be a quiet habitation as it is the city of our solemnities. It is desirable to be quiet in our own houses, but much more so to be quiet in God's house, and have none to make us afraid there. Thus it shall be with Jerusalem, and thine eyes shall see it, which will be a great satisfaction to a good man, *Psal. cxviii. 5, 6. Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem, and peace upon Israel*, thou shalt live to see it and share in it. (2.) An unremoved stability: Jerusalem the city of our solemnities, is indeed but a tabernacle in comparison with the New Jerusalem, the present manifestations of the divine glory and grace are nothing in comparison with those that are reserved for the future state, but it is such a tabernacle as shall not be taken down. After this trouble is over, Jerusalem shall long enjoy a confirmed peace, and her sacred privileges, which are the stakes and cords of her tabernacle, shall not be removed from her, nor any disturbance given to the course and circle of her religious services. God's church on earth is a tabernacle, which though it may be shifted from one place to another, yet shall not be taken down while the world stands; for in every age Christ will have a seed to serve him: the promises of the covenant are its stakes, which shall never be removed, and the ordinances and institutions of the gospel are its cords, which shall never be broken: They are things which cannot be shaken, though heaven and earth be, but shall remain.

6. God himself will be their protector and saviour, *ver. 21, 22.* This is the principal ground of their confidence: He that is himself the glorious Lord will display his glory for us, and be a glory to us; such as shall eclipse the rival glory of the enemy. God in being a gracious Lord is a glorious Lord; for his goodness is his glory: God will be the saviour of Jerusalem, and her glorious Lord. (1.) As a guard against their adversaries abroad: He will be a place of broad rivers and streams. Jerusalem had no considerable river running by it, as most great cities have, nothing but the brook Kidron, and so wanted one of the best natural fortifications, as well as one of the greatest advantages for trade and commerce; and upon this account their enemies despised them, and doubted not but to make an easy prey of them: but the presence and power of God is sufficient at any time to make up the deficiencies of the creature, and of its strength and beauty to us. We have all in God, all we need or can desire. Many external advantages Jerusalem has not, which other places have; but in God there is more than an equivalent. But if there be broad rivers and streams about Jerusalem, may not these yield an easy access to the feet of an invader? No, these are rivers and streams in which shall go no galley with oars, no man of war, or gallant ship: if God himself be the river it must needs be inaccessible to the enemy, they can neither find nor force their way by it. (2.) As a guide to their affairs at home: *For the Lord is our judge*, to whom we are accountable, to whose judgment we refer ourselves, and by whose judgment we abide, and who therefore (we hope) will judge for us; *he is our lawgiver*, his word is a law to us, and to him every thought within us brought into obedience: *he is our king*, to whom we pay homage and tribute, and an inviolable allegiance, and therefore he will save us; for as protection draws allegiance, so allegiance may expect protection, and shall have it with God. By faith we take Christ for our Prince and Saviour, and as such depend upon him and devote ourselves to him. Observe with what an air of triumph, and what an emphasis laid upon the glorious name of God: they comfort themselves with this; *Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver. Jehovah is our king, who being self-existent is self-sufficient, and all-sufficient to us.*

7. The enemies shall be quite infatuated, and all their powers and projects broken, like a ship at sea in stress of weather, that cannot ride out the storm, but having her tackle torn, her mast split, and nothing wherewithal to repair them, is given up for a wreck, *ver. 23.* The tacklings of the Assyrian are loosed, *i. e.* they are like a ship whose tacklings are loosed, or forsaken by the ship's crew, when they give it over for lost, finding that they cannot strengthen the mast, but it will come down; they thought themselves sure of Jerusalem, but when they were just entering the port, as it were, and thought all was their own, they were quite becalmed, and could not spread their sail, but lay wind-bound till God poured the fury of his wrath upon them. The enemies of God's church are often disarmed and unrigged then when they think they have almost gained their point.

8. The wealth of their camp shall be a rich booty for the Jews; *Then is the prey of the great spoil divided*: when the most were slain, the rest fled in confusion, and with such precipitation, that (like the Syrians) they left their tents as they were, so that all the treasure in them fell into the hands of the besieged, and even the lame take the prey, they that tarried at home did divide the spoil. It was so easy to come by, that not only the strong man might make himself master of it, but even the lame man, whose hands were lame that he could not fight, and his feet that he could not pursue; as the victory shall cost him no peril, so the prey shall cost them no toil. And there was such abundance of it, that when those who were forward and came first had carried off as much as they would, even the lame that came late yet found sufficient. Thus God brought good out of evil, and not only delivered Jerusalem, but enriched it and abundantly recompensed the losses they had sustained. Thus comfortably and well do the frights and distresses of the people of God many times end.

9. Both sickness and sin shall be taken away; and then sickness is taken away in mercy, when this is all the fruit of it, and the recovery from it, even the taking away of sin.

(1.) *The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick*; as the lame shall take the prey, so shall the sick, notwithstanding their weakness, make a shift to get to the abandoned camp and seize something for themselves: or there shall be such an universal transport of joy upon this occasion, that even the sick shall for the present forget their sickness and the sorrows of it, and join with the public in its rejoicings; the deliverance of their city shall be their cure. Or it notes, that whereas infectious diseases are commonly the effect of long sieges, it shall not be so with Jerusalem, but the inhabitants of it with their victory and peace shall have health also, and there shall be no complaining upon the account of sickness within their gates; or those that are sick shall bear their sickness without complaining, as long as they see it goes well with Jerusalem. Our sense of private grievances should be drowned in our thanksgiving for public mercies.

(2.) *The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity*; not only the body of the nation forgiven their national guilt in the removing of the national judgment, but particular persons, that dwell therein shall repent and reform, and have their sins pardoned. And this is promised as that which is at the bottom of all other favours; he will do so and so for them; *for he will be merciful to their unrighteousness*, Heb. viii. 12. Sin is the sickness of the soul, when God pardons the sin he heals the disease; and when the diseases of sin are healed by pardoning mercy, the sting of bodily sickness is taken out, and the cause of it removed; so that either the inhabitant shall not be sick, or at least shall not say, I am sick. If iniquity be taken away, we have little reason to complain of outward affliction; *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

C H A P. XXXIV.

*In this chapter we have the fatal doom of all the nations that are enemies to God's church and people, though Edom is only instanced in, because of the old enmity of Esau to Jacob, which was typical, as much as that more ancient enmity of Cain to Abel, and flowed from the original enmity of the serpent to the seed of the woman. It is probable this prophecy had its accomplishment in the great desolations made by the Assyrian army first, or rather by Nebuchadnezzar's army some time after, among those nations that were neighbours to Israel, and had been some way or other injurious to them. That mighty conqueror took a pride in shedding blood and laying countries waste, and therein quite beyond his design he was fulfilling what God here threatened against his and his people's enemies; but we have reason to think it is intended as a denunciation of the wrath of God against all those who fight against the interests of his kingdom among men, that it has its frequent accomplishment in the havoc made by the wars of the nations and other desolating judgments; and will have its full accomplishment in the final dissolution of all things at the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Here is, (1.) A demand of universal attention, *ver. 1.* (2.) A direful scene of blood and confusion presented, *ver. 2—7.* (3.) The reason given for these judgments, *ver. 8.* (4.) The continuance of this desolation, the country being made like the lake of Sodom, *ver. 9, 10.* and the cities abandoned to wild beasts and melancholy fowls, *ver. 11—15.* (5.) The solemn ratification of all this, *ver. 16, 17.* Let us bear and fear.*

1. **C**OME near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. 2. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. 3. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. 4. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. 5. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse to judgment. 6. The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. 7. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. 8. For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.

Here we have a prophecy, as elsewhere we have an history, of the wars of the Lord, which we are sure are all both righteous and successful. This world, as it is his creature, he doth good to, but as it is in the interest of Satan, who is called the god of this world, he fights against it.

1. Here is the trumpet sounded and the war proclaimed, *ver. 1.* all nations must hear and hearken, not only because what God is about to do is well worthy their remark, as *chap. xxxiii. 11.* but because they are all concerned in it; it is with them that God hath a quarrel, it is against them that God is coming forth in wrath. Let them all take notice that the great God is angry with them; his indignation is upon all nations, and therefore let all nations come near to hear. *The trumpet is blown in the city*, Amos iii. 6. *and the watchmen on the walls cry, hearken to the voice of the trumpet*, Jer. vi. 17. *let the earth hear, and the fulness thereof, for it is the Lord's*, Psal. xxiv. 1. and ought to hearken to its maker and master. The world must hear and all things that come forth of it, *i. e.* the children of men, that are of the earth earthly, come out of it and must return to it: or the inanimate products of the earth are called to, as more likely to hearken than sinners, whose hearts are hardened against the calls of God. *Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy*, Micah vi. 2. It is so just a controversy, that all the world may be safely appealed to concerning the equity of it.

2. Here is the manifesto published, setting forth,

(1.) Whom he makes war against, *ver. 2.* *the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations*; they are all in confederacy against God and religion, all in the interest of the devil, and therefore he is angry with them all, even with all the nations that forget him. He hath long suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, Acts xiv. 16. but now he will no longer keep silence. As they have all had the benefit of his patience, so they must all expect now to feel his resentment. His fury is in a special manner upon all their armies. (1.) Because with them they have done mischief to the people of God, those are they that have made bloody work with them, and therefore they must be sure to have blood given them to drink. (2.) Because with them they hope to make their part good against the justice and power of God; they trust to them as their defence, and therefore on them in the first place God's fury will come. Armies before God's fury are but as dry stubble before a consuming fire, though never so numerous and courageous.

(2.) Whom he makes war for, and what are the grounds and reasons of the

the war, *ver. 8.* *It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and he it is to whom vengeance belongs, and who is never unrighteous in taking vengeance.* Rom. iii. 5. As there is a day of the Lord's patience, so there will be a day of his vengeance; for though he bear long, he will not bear always; it is *the year of recompence for the controversy of Zion.* Zion is the holy city, the city of our solemnities, a type and figure of the church of God in the world. Zion has a just quarrel with her neighbours for the wrongs they have done her, for all the treacherous and barbarous usage they have given her, profaning her holy things, laying waste her palaces and slaying her sons; she has left it to God to plead her cause, and he will do it when the time, even the set time to favour Zion, comes: then he will recompence to her persecutors and oppressors all the mischiefs they have done her. The controversy will be decided that Zion has been wronged, and therein Zion's God has been himself abused; judgment will be given upon this decision and execution done. Note, There is a time prefixed in the divine counsels for the deliverance of the church and the destruction of her enemies; a year of the redeemed which will come, *a year of recompences for the controversy of Zion*; and we must patiently wait till then, and judge nothing before the time.

3. Here are the operations of the war, and the methods of it settled, with an infallible assurance of success.

1. *The sword of the Lord is bathed in heaven*, that is all the preparation here made for the war, *ver. 5.* It may probably allude to some custom they had then of bathing their swords in some liquor or other to harden them or brighten them; it is the same with the scrubbing of it that it may glitter, *Ezek. xxi. 9, 10, 11.* God's sword is bathed in heaven, in his counsel and decree, in his justice and power, and then there is no standing before it.

2. It shall come down; what he has determined shall without fail be put in execution, it shall come down from heaven, and the higher the place is from whence it comes, the heavier will it fall; it will come down upon Idumea, the people of God's curse, *i. e.* that lie under his curse and are by it doomed to destruction. Miserable, for ever miserable, are they that have by their sins made themselves the people of God's curse; for the sword of the Lord will infallibly attend the curse of the Lord, and execute the sentences of it; and those whom he curseth they are cursed indeed. It shall come down to judgment, to execute judgment upon sinners. Note, God's sword of war is always a sword of justice. It is observed of him out of whose mouth goeth the sharp sword, that *in righteousness he doth judge and make war*, *Rev. xix. 11—15.*

3. The nations and their armies shall be given up to the sword, *ver. 2.* *God hath delivered them to the slaughter*, and then they cannot deliver themselves, nor can all the friends they have deliver them from it: those only are slain whom God delivers to the slaughter, for the keys of death are in his hand; and in delivering them to the slaughter, he hath utterly destroyed them; their destruction is as sure when God hath doomed them to it, as if they were destroyed already, utterly destroyed. God has in effect delivered all the cruel enemies of his church to the slaughter by that word, *Rev. xiii. 10.* *He that killeth with the sword must be killed by the sword*, for the Lord is righteous.

4. Pursuant to the sentence a terrible slaughter shall be made among them, *ver. 6.* *The sword of the Lord when it comes down with commission doth vast execution*, it is filled, satiated, surfeited with blood, the blood of the slain, and made fat with their fatness. When the day of God's abused mercy and patience is over, the sword of his justice gives no quarter, spares none. Men have by sin lost the honour of the human nature, and made themselves like the beasts that perish, and therefore are justly denied the compassions and respects that are owing to the human nature, and killed as beasts; and no more made of slaying an army of men than of butchering a flock of lambs and goats, and feeding on the fat of the kidneys of rams. Nay, the sword of the Lord shall not only dispatch the lambs and goats, the infantry of their armies, the poor common soldiers, *ver. 7.* the unicorns too shall be made to come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls, though they are never so proud, and strong, and fierce, *the great men, and the mighty men, and the chief captains*, *Rev. vi. 15.* the sword of the Lord will make as easy a prey of them as of the lambs and the goats. The greatest of men are nothing before the wrath of the great God. See what bloody work will be made; *The land shall be soaked with blood, as with the rain that comes often upon it*, and in great abundance, and their dust, their dry and barren land, shall be *made fat with the fatness of men slain in their full strength* as with a manure. Nay, even the mountains that are hard and rocky, shall be melted with their blood, *ver. 3.* These expressions are hyperbolic, as St. John's vision of *blood to the horse-bridles*, *Rev. xiv. 20.* and are made up of because they sound very dreadful to sense, (it makes us even shiver to think of such abundance of human gore) and are therefore proper enough to express the terror of God's wrath, which is dreadful beyond conception and expression. See what work sin makes and wrath makes even in this world, and think how much more terrible the wrath to come is, which will bring down the unicorns themselves to the bars of the pit.

5. This great slaughter will be a great sacrifice to the justice of God, *ver. 6.* *The Lord hath a great sacrifice in Bozrah*, there it is that the great Redeemer hath his garments dyed with blood, *Isa. lxiii. 1.* Sacrifices were intended for the honour of God, to make it appear that he hates sin and demands satisfaction for it, and that nothing but blood will make atonement; and for these ends the slaughter is made, that in it the *wrath of God may be revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, especially their ungodly unrighteous enmity to his people, which was the sin that the Edomites were notoriously guilty of. In great sacrifices abundance of beasts were killed, hecatombs offered, and their blood poured out before the altar; and so will it be in the day of the Lord's vengeance. And thus had the whole earth been soaked with the blood of sinners, if Jesus Christ the great propitiation had not shed his blood for us; but those who reject him, and will not make a covenant with God by that sacrifice, will themselves fall as victims to divine wrath. Damned sinners are everlasting sacrifices, *Mark ix. 49.* They that sacrifice not, (which is the character of the ungodly, *Eccles. ix. 2.*) must be sacrificed.

6. These slain shall be detestable to mankind, and shall be as much their loathing as ever they were terror, *ver. 3.* *They shall be cast out*, and none shall pay them the respect of a decent burial; but *their stink shall come up out of their carcases*, that all people by their odious smell, as well as by the ghastly sight, may be made to conceive an indignation against sin and a dread of the wrath of God. They lie unburied that they may remain monuments of divine justice.

7. The effect and consequence of this slaughter shall be an universal confusion and desolation, as if the whole frame of nature were dissolved and melted down, *ver. 4.* All the host of heaven shall pine and waste away, so the word is; the sun shall be darkened, and the moon look black, or be turned into blood; the heavens themselves shall be rolled together as a scroll of parchment when we have done with it and lay it by, or as when it is shrivelled up by the heat of the fire. The stars shall fall as the leaves

in autumn; all the beauty, joy, and comfort of the vanquished nation shall be lost and done away, magistracy and government shall be abolished, and all dominion and rule but that of the sword of war shall fall. Conquerors in those times affected to lay waste the countries they conquered; and such a complete desolation is here described by such figurative expressions, as will yet have a literal and full accomplishment in the dissolution of all things at the end of time; of which last day of judgment the judgments which God doth now sometimes remarkably execute on sinful nations, are figures, earnest and fore-runners; and by these we should be awakened to think of that, for which reason these expressions are used here, and *Rev. vi. 12, 13.* but they are used without a metaphor, *2 Pet. iii. 10.* where we are told that *the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth shall be burnt up.*

9. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. 10. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste, none shall pass through it for ever and ever. 11. ¶ But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. 12. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. 13. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof, and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. 14. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow, the screech-owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. 15. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. 16. ¶ Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. 17. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

This prophecy looks very black, but surely it looks so further than upon Edom and Bozrah; (1.) It speaks the melancholy changes that are often made by the divine providence, in countries, cities, palaces and families; places that have flourished and been much frequented strangely go to decay. We know not where to find the places where many great towns celebrated in history once stood. Fruitful countries in process of time are turned into barrenness; and pompous populous cities into ruinous heaps. Old decayed castles look frightful, and their ruins are almost as much dreaded as ever their garrisons were. (2.) It speaks the destroying judgments which are the products of God's wrath, and the just punishment of those that are enemies to his people, which God will inflict when *the year of the redemption is come*, and *the year of recompence for the controversy of Zion*. Those that aim to ruin the church can never do that, but will infallibly ruin themselves. (3.) It speaks the final desolation of this wicked world, which is *reserved unto fire at the day of Judgment*, *2 Pet. iii. 7.* The earth itself, when it and all the works that are therein shall be burned up, will (for aught I know) be turned into hell to all those that set their affections only on earthly things; however it shows us what will be the lot of the *generation of God's curse*.

1. The country shall become like the lake of Sodom, *ver. 9, 10.* The streams thereof that both watered the land, and pleased and refreshed the inhabitants, shall now be turned into pitch, shall be congealed, shall look black, and shall move slowly or not at all. *Their floods to lazy streams of pitch shall turn*; so Sir R. Blackmore. And the dust thereof shall be turned into brimstone; so combustible hath sin made their land, that it shall take fire at the first spark of God's wrath struck upon it; and when it hath taken fire it shall become burning pitch: the fire shall be universal, not a house or town on fire, but a whole country. And it shall not be in the power of any to suppress or extinguish it; it shall burn continually, burn perpetually, and shall not be quenched night nor day. The torment of those in hell, or that have a hell within them in their own consciences, is without interruption; the *smoke of the fire goes up for ever*. As long as there are provoking sinners on the earth, *from one generation to another*, an *increase of sinful men*, to *augment the fierce anger of the Lord*, *Numb. xxxii. 14.* there will be a righteous God in heaven to punish them for it. And as long as people keep up a succession of sinners, God will have a succession of plagues for them; nor will any that fall under the wrath of God be ever able to recover themselves. It would be sound, how light forever men make of it, that it is a *scandalous thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. If the land be doomed to destruction, none shall pass through it, but travellers will choose rather to go a great way about than come within smell of it.

2. The cities shall become like old decayed houses, that being deserted by the owners look very frightful, being commonly possessed by beasts of prey or fowl that are ill omen. See how dismally the palaces of the enemy leak; the description is very elegant and fine.

1. God shall mark them for ruin and destruction; he shall stretch out upon Bozrah the line of confusion with the stones or plummets of emptiness, *ver. 11.* This intimates the equity of the sentence passed upon it, it is given according to the rules of justice, and the exact agreeableness of the execution with the sentence; the destruction is not wrought at random, but by line and level. The confusion and emptiness that shall overspread the face of the whole country, shall be like that of the whole earth when it was Tophu and Bohu, the very words here used, without form and void. Sin will soon turn a paradise into a chaos, and sullies the beauty of the whole creation, *Gen. i. 2.* When there is confusion, there will soon be emptiness; but both are appointed by the Governor of the world, and in exact proportions.

2. Their great men shall be all cut off, and none of them shall dare to appear, *ver. 12.* *They shall call the nobles of the kingdom*, to take care of the arduous affairs which lie before them, but none shall be there to take this

ruin under their hand, and all her princes having the sad tidings brought them shall be nothing, shall be at their wits-end, and not be able to stand them in faced, to shelter them from destruction.

3. Even the houses of state and those of strength shall become as wildernesses, *ver. 13.* not only grass shall grow, but *thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof*, and there shall be none to cut them up or tread them down. We sometimes see ruined buildings thus overgrown with rubbish. It notes that the place shall not only be uninhabited and unfrequented where a full court used to be kept, but that it shall be under the curse of God; for thorns and thistles were the products of the curse, *Gen. iii. 18.*

4. They shall become the residence and rendezvous of fearful, frightful beasts and birds, that usually frequent such melancholy places, because there they may be undisturbed; and when they are frightened thither, they help to frighten men thence. This circumstance of the desolation being apt to strike a horror upon the mind is much enlarged upon here, *ver. 11.* The cormorant shall possess it, or the pelican that affects to be solitary, *Psal. cii. 6.* and the bittern, that makes a hideous noise, the owl a melancholy bird, the raven a bird of prey, invited by the dead carcases, shall dwell there, *(with all the ill-boding monsters of the air, Sir R. B.)* all the unclean birds, which were not for the service of man, *ver. 13.* *It shall be a habitation for dragons*, which are poisonous and hurtful.

*And in their lofty rooms of state,
Where cringing sycophants did wait
Dragons shall hiss and hungry wolves shall howl:
In courts before by mighty lords possessed.
The serpent shall erect his speckled crest.
Or fold his circling spires to rest.*

Sir R. BLACKMORE.

That which was a court for princes, shall now be a court for owls or ostriches, *ver. 14.* *The wild beasts of the desert*, the dry and sandy country, shall meet as it were by appointment with the wild beasts of the island, the wet marshy country, and shall regale themselves with such a perfect desolation as they shall find there.

*Leopards and all the roaring brotherhoods,
That range the plains or lurk in woods.
Each other shall invite to come,
And make this wilder place their home:
Fierce beasts of every frightful shape and size.
Shall settle here their bloody colonies.*

Sir R. BLACKMORE.

The satyr shall cry to his fellow to go with him to this desert place, or being there shall please themselves that they have found such an agreeable habitation. There shall the screech-owl rest, a night bird, and an ominous one: the great owl shall there make her nest, *(ver. 15.)* and lay and hatch; the breed of them shall be kept up to heir the desolate place: the vultures that feast on carcases shall be gathered there every one with his mate. Now, observe, (1.) How the places which men have deserted and keep at a distance from, are proper receptacles for other animals, which the providence of God takes care of, and will not neglect. (2.) Whom they resemble that are morose, unsociable and unconvertible, and affect a melancholy retirement; they are like these solitary creatures that take delight in desolations. (3.) What a dismal change sin makes: it turns a fruitful land into barrenness, a frequented city into a wilderness.

5. Here is an insurance given of the full accomplishment of this prediction, even to the most minute circumstance of it, *ver. 16, 17.* *Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read.* When the destruction comes, compare the event with the prediction, and you will find it to answer exactly. Note, The book of the prophets is the book of the Lord, and as of divine original and authority we ought to consult and converse with it: we must not only read it, but seek out of it, search into it, turn first to one text, and then to another, and compare them together. Abundance of useful knowledge might be thus extracted, by a diligent search, out of the scriptures, which cannot be got by a superficial reading of them. When you have read the prediction out of the book of the Lord, then observe, (1.) That according to what you have read, so you see, not one of these shall fail, either beast or fowl: and it being foretold that they shall possess it from generation to generation, in order to that, that the species may be propagated, none shall want her mate; these marks of desolation shall be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the land. (2.) That God's mouth having commanded this direful muster, *his Spirit shall gather them*, as the creatures were by instinct gathered to Adam to be named, and to Noah to be housed. What God's word has appointed his Spirit will effect and bring about, for no word of God shall fail to the ground. The word of God's promise shall in like manner be accomplished by the operations of the spirit. (3.) That there is an exact order and proportion observed in the accomplishment of this threatening: he hath cast the lot for these birds and beasts, so that each one shall know his place, as readily as if it were marked by line. See the like, *Joel ii. 7, 8.* *They shall not break their ranks neither shall one thrust another.* The soothsayers among the heathen foretold events by the flight of birds, as if the fate of men depended on them. But here find that the flight of birds is under the direction of the God of Israel, he hath cast the lot for them. (4.) That the desolation may be perpetual, *they shall possess it for ever.* God's Jerusalem may be laid in ruins but Jerusalem of old recovered itself out of its ruins, till it gave place to the gospel Jerusalem, which may be brought low, but shall be rebuilt, and shall continue till it give place to the heavenly Jerusalem. But the enemies of the church shall be for ever desolate, shall be punished with an everlasting destruction.

CHAP. XXXV.

*As after a prediction of God's judgments upon the world, chap. xxiv. follows a promise of great mercy to be had in store for his church, chap. xxv. so here after a black and dreadful scene of confusion in the foregoing chapter, we have in this a bright and pleasant one, which though it foretel the flourishing state of Hezekiah's kingdom in the latter part of his reign, yet surely looks as far beyond that as the prophecy in the foregoing chapter, doth beyond the destruction of the Edomites; both were typical, and it concerns us most to look at those things which they are typical of, the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. When the world that lies in wickedness shall be laid in ruins, and the Jewish church that persisted in infidelity shall become a desolation, then the gospel church shall be set up and made to flourish. (1.) The Gentiles shall be brought into it, *ver. 1, 2, 7.* (2.) The well-wishers to it that were weak and timorous, shall be encouraged, *ver. 3, 4.* (3.) Miracles shall be wrought both on the souls and bodies of men, *ver. 5, 6.**

(4.) *It shall be conducted in the way of holiness, ver. 8, 9.* (5.) *It shall be brought at last to endless joys, ver. 10.* Thus do we find more of Christ and heaven in this chapter, than one would have expected in the Old Testament.

1. **T**HE wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. 2. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. 3. ¶ Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.

In these verses we have,

1. The desert land blooming. In the chapter before we had a populous and fruitful country turned into a horrid wilderness, here we have in lieu of that a wilderness turned into a good land. When the land of Judah was freed from the Assyrian army, those parts of the country that had been made as a wilderness by the ravages and outrages they committed, began to recover themselves and to look pleasantly again, and to blossom as the rose. When the Gentile nations that had been long as a wilderness, bringing forth no fruit to God, received the gospel, joy came with it to them, *Psal. lxxvii. 3, 4.* —xcvi. 11, 12. When Christ was preached in Samaria there was great joy in that city, *Acts viii. 8.* they that sat in darkness saw a great and joyful light. And when they blossomed, i. e. gave hopes of abundance of fruit; for that was it which the preachers of the gospel aimed at, *John xv. 16.* to go and bring forth fruit, *Rom. i. 13. Col. i. 6.* Though blossoms are not fruit, and often miscarry and come to nothing, yet they are in order to fruit. Converting grace makes the soul that was as a wilderness to rejoice with joy and singing, and to blossom abundantly. The flourishing desert shall have all the glory of Lebanon given to it, which consisted in the strength and stateliness of its cedars, together with the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, which consisted in corn and cattle. Whatever is valuable in any institution is brought into the gospel. All the beauty of the Jewish church was admitted into the Christian church, and appeared in its perfection, as the apostle shews at large in his epistle to the Hebrews; that whatever was excellent and desirable in the Mosaic economy is translated into the evangelical institutes.

2. The glory of God shining forth: *they shall see the glory of the Lord*, i. e. God will manifest himself more than ever in his grace and love to mankind, (for that is his glory and excellency) and he shall give them eyes to see it, and hearts to be duly affected with it. This is that which will make the desert blossom. The more we see by faith of the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God, the more joyful and more fruitful shall we be.

3. The feeble and fainthearted encouraged, *ver. 4, 5.* God's prophets and ministers are in a special manner charged by virtue of their office to strengthen the weak hands, i. e. to comfort those who could not yet recover the mighty fright they had been put into by the Assyrian army, with an assurance that God would now return in mercy to them. This is the design of the gospel; (1.) To strengthen those that are weak, and to confirm them; the weak hands that are unable either to work or fight, and can hardly be lifted up in prayer; and the feeble knees that are unable either to stand or walk, and unfit for the race set before us. The gospel furnishes us with strengthening considerations, and shews us where strength is laid up for us. Among true Christians there are many that have weak hands and feeble knees, that are yet but babes in Christ; but it is our duty to strengthen our brethren, *Luke xxii. 32.* not only to bear with the infirm, but to do what we can to confirm them, *Rom. xv. 1.* 1 *Thess. v. 14.* It is our duty also to strengthen ourselves, to lift up the hands which hung down, *Heb. xii. 12.* improving the strength God has given us, and exerting it. (2.) To hearten those that are timorous and discouraged; *say to them that are of a fearful heart*, because of their own weakness, and the strength of their enemies, that are hasty, (so the word is) that are for betaking themselves to flight upon the first alarm and giving up the cause, that say in their haste they are cut off and undone, *Psal. cxi. 22.* There is enough in the gospel to silence these fears, it saith to them, and let them say it to themselves, and one by another, *Be strong, fear not.* Fear is weakening, the more we strive against it, the stronger we are both for doing and suffering; and for our encouragement to strive, he that saith to us, *be strong*, hath laid help for us upon One that is mighty.

4. Assurance given of the approach of a Saviour; *your God will come with vengeance*; God will appear for you against your enemies, will recompense both their injuries and your losses. The Messiah will come in the fulness of time to take vengeance on the powers of darkness, to spoil them and make a shew of them openly, to recompense those that mourn in Zion with abundant comforts; he will come and save us; with the hopes of this the Old Testament saints strengthened their weak hands. He will come again at the end of time, will come in flaming fire, to recompense tribulation to them that have troubled his people, and to those who were troubled rest, such a rest as will be not only a final period, but a full reward of all their troubles. 2 *Thess. i. 6, 7.* They whose hearts tremble for the ark of God, and are under a concern for his church in the world, may silence their fears with this, God will take the work into his own hands; your God will come, who pleads your cause, and owns your interest, even God himself, who is God alone.

5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons, where each lay shall be grass with reeds and rushes. 8. And an highway shall be there; and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. 9. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall

shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: 19. And the ransomed of the LORD, shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Then when your God shall come, even Christ, to set up his kingdom in the world, to which all the prophets bare witness, especially towards the conclusion of the prophecies of the temporal deliverances of the church, and this evangelical prophet especially, then look for great things.

1. Wonders shall be wrought in the kingdoms both of nature and grace, wonders of mercy wrought upon the children of men, sufficient to evince that it is no less than a God that comes to us.

(1.) Wonders shall be wrought on men's bodies, *ver. 5, 6. The eyes of the blind shall be opened*; this was often done by our Lord Jesus when he was here upon earth, with a word's speaking, and one he gave sight to that was born blind, *Matt. ix. 27.—xii. 22.—xx. 30. John ix. 6.* By his power the ears of the deaf also were unstopped; with one word, *ephatha*, be opened, *Mark vii. 34.* Many that were lame had the use of their limbs restored, so perfectly that they could not only go but leap, and with so much joy to them that they could not forbear leaping for joy, as that impotent man, *Acts iii. 8.* The dumb also were enabled to speak, and then no marvel they were disposed to sing for joy, *Matt. ix. 32, 33.* These miracles Christ wrought, to prove that he was sent of God, *John iii. 2.* nay, working them by his own power and in his own name, he proved that he was God, the same who at first made man's mouth, the hearing ear, and the seeing eye. When he would prove his divine mission to John's disciples, he did it by miracles of this kind, in which this scripture was fulfilled. (2.) Wonders, greater wonders, shall be wrought on men's souls: by the word and Spirit of Christ; those that were spiritually blind were enlightened, *Acts xvi. 18.* those that were deaf to the calls of God were made to hear them readily, as Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened so that she attended, *Acts xvi. 14.* Those that were impotent to every thing that is good, by divine grace are made not only able for it, but active in it, and run the way of God's commandments: Those also that were dumb and knew not how to speak of God or to God, having their understanding opened to know him, shall thereby have their lips opened to shew forth his praise: the tongue of the dumb shall sing for joy, the joy of God's salvation. Praise shall be perfected out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

2. The Spirit shall be poured out from on high: There shall be waters and streams, rivers of living water, which when our Saviour spake of, as the fulfilling of the scripture, and most probably of this scripture, the evangelist tells us he spake of the Spirit, *John vii. 38, 39.* as doth also this prophet, *Isa. xxxii. 15.* so here, *ver. 6. in the wilderness*, where one would least expect it, shall waters break out. This was fulfilled when the Holy Ghost fell upon the Gentiles that heard the word, *Acts x. 44.* then were the fountains of life opened, whence streams flowed that watered the earth abundantly. These waters are said to break out, which notes a pleasing surprise to the Gentile world, such as brought them as it were into a new world.

The blessed effect of this shall be that the parched ground shall become a pool, *ver. 7.* They that laboured and were heavy laden under the burden of guilt, and were scorched with the sense of divine wrath, sound rest, and refreshment, and abundant comforts in the gospel. In the thirsty land, where no water was, no ordinances, *Psal. lxxiii. 1.* there shall be springs of water, a gospel ministry and by that the administration of all gospel ordinances, in their purity and plenty, which are the ever that maketh glad the city of our God, *Psal. xlii. 4.* In the habitation of dragons, who chose to dwell in the parched, scorched ground, *chap. xxxiv. 9, 13.* these waters shall flow and dispossess them, so that where each lay shall be grafs with reeds and rushes, great plenty of useful products. Thus it was when Christian churches were planted and flourished greatly in the cities of the Gentiles, that for many ages had been the habitation of dragons, or devils rather, as Babylon, *Rev. xviii. 2.* when the property of the idols' temples were altered, and they were converted to the service of Christianity, then the habitation of dragons became fruitful fields.

3. The way of religion and godliness shall be laid open; it is here called the way of holiness, *ver. 8.* the way both of holy worship and a holy conversation; holiness is the rectitude of human nature and will, in conformity to the divine nature and will. The way of holiness is that course of religious duties in which men ought to walk and press forwards, with an eye to the glory of God, and their own felicity in the enjoyment of him. When our God shall come to save us, he shall chalk out to us this way by his gospel, so as it had never been before described.

(1.) It shall be an appointed way: not a way of sufferance, but a high-way, and a way into which we are directed by a divine authority, and in which we are protected by a divine warrant: it is the king's highway, the King of kings highway, in which though we may be way-laid we cannot be stopped. The way of holiness is the way of God's commandments, it is (as highways used to be) the good old way, *Jer. vi. 16.*

(2.) It shall be an appropriated way, the way in which God will bring his own chosen to himself, but the unclean shall not pass over it, either to defile it, or to disturb those that walk in it. It is a way by itself, distinguished from the way of the world, for it is a way of separation from, and non-conformity to this world; it shall be for those whom the Lord hath set apart for himself, *Psal. iv. 3.* shall be reserved for them, the redeemed shall walk there, and the satisfaction they take in these ways of pleasantness shall be out of the reach of molestation from an evil world: The unclean shall not pass over it, for it shall be a fair way, those that walk in it are the undefiled in the way, who escape in the pollution that is in the world.

(3.) It shall be a straight way: The wayfaring men, who choose to travel in it, though fools, of weak capacity in other things, yet shall have such plain directions from the word and Spirit of God in this way, that they shall not err therein, not that they shall be infallible, no, not in their own conduct, or that they shall in nothing mistake; but they shall not be guilty of any fatal miscarriage, shall not so miss their way but that they shall recover it again, and get well to their journey's end. They that are in the narrow way, though some may fall into one path and others into another, not all equally right, but all meeting at last in the same end, yet they shall never fall into the broad way again; the Spirit of truth shall lead them into all truth that is necessary for them. Note, The way to heaven is a plain way, and easy to it; God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, and made them wise to salvation; knowledge is easy to him that understandeth.

(4.) It shall be a way: No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast, *ver. 9.* none to hurt and destroy; they that keep close to this way, keep out of the reach of Satan the roaring lion, that wicked one toucheth them not. They that walk in the way of holiness may proceed with a holy security and serenity of mind, knowing that nothing can do them any real hurt: they shall be quiet from the fear of evil. It was in Hezekiah's days, some time after the captivity of the ten tribes, that God being displeased with the colonies that settled there sent lions among them, *2 Kings xvii. 25.* But Judah keeps her integrity, and therefore no lion shall be there. Those that

walk in the way of holiness must separate themselves from the unclean and the ravenous, must save themselves from an unloving generation; and, hoping that they themselves are of the redeemed, let them walk with the redeemed which shall walk there.

4. The end of this way shall be everlasting joy, *ver. 10.* This precious promise of peace now, will end shortly in endless joys and rest for the soul. Here is good news for the citizens of Zion, rest to the weary; the ransomed of the Lord, who therefore ought to follow him wherever he goes (*Rev. xiv. 4.*) shall return and come to Zion: (1.) To serve and worship God in the church militant; they did deliver themselves out of Babylon, *Zeck. ii. 7.* shall ask the way to Zion, *Jer. l. 5.* and shall find the way, *Isa. lii. 12.* God will open them a door of escape out of their captivity, and it shall be an effectual door, though there be many adversaries. They shall join themselves to the gospel church, that mount Zion the city of the living God, *Heb. xii. 22.* They shall come with songs of joy and praise for their deliverance out of Babylon, where they wept upon every remembrance of Zion, *Psal. cxxxvii. 1.* They that by faith are made citizens of the gospel of Zion, may go on their way rejoicing, *Acts viii. 39.* they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, and be still praising him; they rejoice in Christ Jesus, and the sorrows and sighs of their convictions are made to flee away by the power of divine consolations. They that mourn are blessed, for they shall be comforted. (2.) To see and enjoy God in the church triumphant; they that walk in the way of holiness, under the conduct of their Redeemer, shall come to Zion at last to the heavenly Zion, shall come in a body, shall all be presented together faultless at the coming of Christ's glory with exceeding joy, *Jude 24.* *Rev. vii. 17.* they shall come with songs. When God's people returned out of Babylon to Zion, they came weeping, *Jer. l. 4.* But they shall come to heaven singing a new song, which no man can learn, *Rev. xiv. 3.* When they shall enter into the joy of the Lord, it shall be what the joys of this world never could be, everlasting joy, without mixture, interruption or period; it shall not only fill their hearts to their own perfect and perpetual satisfaction, but it shall be upon their heads as an ornament of grace and a crown of glory, as a garland worn in token of victory; their joy shall be visible, and no longer a secret thing, as it is here in this world; it shall be proclaimed to the glory of God, and their mutual encouragement; They shall then obtain that joy and gladness which they could never expect on this side heaven, and sorrow and sighing will flee away for ever, as the shadows of the night before the rising sun. Thus these prophecies which relate to the Assyrian invasion conclude, for the support of the people of God under their calamity, and to direct their joy in their deliverance from it to something higher. Our joyful hopes and prospects of eternal life should swallow up both all the sorrows and all the joys of this present time.

C H A P. XXXVI.

The prophet Isaiah is in this, and the three following chapters, an historian; for the scripture history, as well as the scripture-prophecy, is given by inspiration of God, and was dictated to holy men. Many of the prophecies of the foregoing chapters, had their accomplishment in Sennacherib's invading of Judah, and besieging Jerusalem, and the miraculous defeat he met with there; and therefore the story of this is here inserted, both for the explication and confirmation of the prophecy: The key of prophecy is to be found in history; and here, that we might have the readier entrance, it is as it were hung at the door: And the exact fulfilling of this prophecy might serve to confirm the faith of God's people in the other prophecies, the accomplishment of which was at a greater distance. Whether this story was taken from the book of Kings, and added here, or whether it was first written by Isaiah here, and from hence taken into the book of Kings, it is not material: But the story is the same almost verbatim: and it was so memorable an event, that it was well worthy to be twice recorded, *2 Kings xviii. and xiv. and here; and an abridgement of it likewise, 2 Chron. xxxii. We shall be but short in our observation upon this story here, having largely explained it there. In this chapter we have,* (1.) The descent which the king of Assyria made upon Judah, and his success against all defended cities, *ver. 1.* (2.) The conference he desired to have with Hezekiah, and the managers on both sides, *ver. 2, 3.* (3.) Rabshakeh's railing, blasphemous speech with which he designed to frighten Hezekiah into a submission, and persuade him to surrender at discretion, *ver. 4—10.* (4.) His appeal to the people and his attempt to persuade them to desert Hezekiah, and so force him to surrender, *ver. 11—20.* (5.) The report of this made to Hezekiah by his agents, *ver. 21, 22.*

1. NOW it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defended cities of Judah, and took them. 2. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh, from Lachish to Jerusalem, unto king Hezekiah, with a great army: and he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the high-way of the fuller's field. 3. Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiash's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder. 4. ¶ And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah; Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, what confidence is this wherein thou trustest? 4. I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war; now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? 6. Lo, thou trustest in the staff of the broken reed, on Egypt: whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him. 7. But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar. 8. Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. 9. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10. And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? the LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

We shall here only observe some practical lessons from hence:

1. That a people may be in the way of their duty, and yet meet with trouble and distress. Hezekiah was reforming, and his people in some measure reformed: and yet their country is at that time invaded, and a great part of it laid waste. Perhaps they began to grow remiss and cool in the work of reformation: were doing it by halves, and ready to sit down short of a thorough reformation; and then God visited them with this judgment, to put life into them and that good cause. We must not wonder if when we are doing well, God sends afflictions to quicken us to do better, to do our best, and to press forwards towards perfection.

2. That we must never be secure of the continuance of our peace in this world, nor think our mountain stands so strong, as that it cannot be moved. Hezekiah was not only a pious king, but prudent, both in his administration at home and his treaties abroad. His affairs were in a good posture, and he seemed particularly to be upon good terms with the king of Assyria; for he had lately made his peace with him by a rich present, *2 Kings xviii.* 14. and yet that perfidious prince pours an army into his country all of a sudden and lays it waste. It is good for us therefore always to keep up an expectation of trouble, that when it comes it may be no surprise to us, and then it will be the less a terror.

3. That God sometimes permits the enemies of his people, even those that are most impious and treacherous, to prevail far against them: The king of Assyria took all or most of the fenced cities of Judah, and then the country would of course be an easy prey to him. Wickedness may prosper a while, but cannot prosper always.

4. Proud men love to talk big, to boast of what they are, and have, and have done; nay, and of what they will do, do insult over others, and set all mankind at defiance: though thereby they render themselves ridiculous to all wise men, and obnoxious to the wrath of that God who resisted the proud. But thus they think to make themselves feared, though they make themselves hated, and to carry their point by *great swelling words of vanity*, Jude 16.

5. The enemies of God's people endeavour to conquer them by frightening them, especially by frightening them from their confidence in God. Thus Rabshakeh here with noise and banter, runs down Hezekiah as utterly unable to cope with his master, or in the least to make head against him. It concerns us therefore, that we may keep our ground against the enemies of our souls, to keep up our spirits by keeping up our hope in God.

6. It is acknowledged on all hands, that those who forsake God's service, forfeit his protection. If it had been true which Rabshakeh alleged, that Hezekiah had thrown down God's altars, he might justly infer, that he could not with any assurance trust in him for succour and relief, *ver. 7.* We may say thus to presuming sinners, who say they trust in the Lord and in his mercy; is not this he whose commandments they had lived in the contempt of, whose name they have dishonoured, and whose ordinances they have slighted, how can they expect to find favour with him?

7. It is an easy thing and very common, for those that persecute the church and people of God, to pretend a commission from him for so doing. Rabshakeh could say, *Am I now come up without the Lord?* when really he was come up against the Lord, *chap. xxxvii. 28.* They that kill the servants of the Lord, think they do him service, and say, *Let the Lord be glorified.* But sooner or later they will be made to know their error to their cost, to their confusion.

11. ¶ Then said Eliakim, and Shebna, and Joah unto Rabshakeh, *Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people, that are on the wall.* 12. ¶ But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee, to speak these words? *hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?* 13. Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. 14. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you. 15. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. 16. Harken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern: 17. Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18. Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19. Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20. Who are they amongst all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? 21. But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. 22. ¶ Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

We may hence learn these lessons:

1. That while princes and counsellors have public matters under debate, it is not fair to appeal to the people. It was a reasonable motion which Hezekiah's plenipotentiaries made, that this parley should be held in a language which the people did not understand, *ver. 11.* because reasons of state are secret things, and ought to be kept secret, the vulgar being incompetent judges of them: It is therefore an unfair practice, and not doing as men would be done by, to incense subjects against their rulers by base insinuations.

2. Proud and haughty scornfuls the fairer they are spoken to, commonly the fouler they speak; nothing could be said more mildly and respectfully

than that which Hezekiah's agents said to Rabshakeh; Besides, that the thing itself was just which they desired, they called themselves his servants, they petition for it, *Speak, we pray thee:* but this made him the more spiteful and imperious. To give rough answers to those who give us soft answers, is one way of rendering evil for good; and those are wicked indeed, and it is to be feared incurable, with whom that which used to turn away wrath, doth but make ill worse.

3. When Satan would tempt men from trusting in God, and cleaving to him, he doth it by insinuating, that in yielding to him they may better their condition; but it is a false suggestion, and grossly absurd, and therefore to be rejected with the utmost abhorrence. When the world and the flesh say to us, *Make an agreement with us, and come out to us*, submit to our dominion, and come into our interests, and *you shall eat every one of his own vine*; they do but deceive us, promising liberty then when they would lead us into the basest captivity and slavery. One might as good take Rabshakeh's word as theirs for kind usage and fair quarter; therefore *when they speak fair, believe them not.* Let them say what they will, there is no land like the land of promise, the holy land.

4. Nothing can be more absurd in itself, nor a greater affront to the true and living God, than to compare him with the gods of the Heathen; as if he could do no more for the protection of his worshippers, than they can for the protection of theirs; and as if the God of Israel could as easily be mastered as the gods of Hamath and Arphad. Whereas they are vanity and a lie, they are nothing, he is the great *I am*, they are the creatures of men's fancy and the work of men's hands: He is the Creator of all things.

5. Presumptuous sinners are ready to think, that because they have been too hard for their fellow-creatures, they are therefore a match for their Creator. This and the other nation they have subdued, and therefore the Lord himself shall not deliver Jerusalem out of their hand. But though the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth, let them not strive with the potter.

6. It is sometimes prudent not to answer a fool according to his folly: Hezekiah's command was, *Answer him not*; it will but provoke him to rail and blaspheme yet more and more; leave it to God to stop his mouth, for you cannot. They had reason enough on their side, but it would be hard to speak it to such an unreasonable adversary without a mixture of passion; and if they should fail to rail like him, Rabshakeh would be quite too hard for them at that weapon.

7. It becomes the people of God to lay to heart the dishonour done to God by the blasphemies of wicked men, though they do not think it prudence to reply to those blasphemies. Though they answered him not a word, yet they rent their clothes in a holy zeal for the glory of God's name, and a holy indignation at the contempt put upon it. They tore their garments when they heard blasphemy, as taking no pleasure in their own ornaments, when God's honour suffered.

CHAP. XXXVII.

In this chapter we have a further repetition of the story which we had before in the book of kings, concerning Sennacherib. In the chapter before, we had him conquering and threatening to conquer. In this chapter we have him falling, and at last fallen; in answer to prayer, and in performance of many of the prophecies which we have met with in the foregoing chapters. Here we have, (1.) Hezekiah's pious resentment of Rabshakeh's impious discourse, *ver. 1.* (2.) The grievous message he sent to Isaiah to desire his prayers, *ver. 2-5.* (3.) The encouraging answer which Isaiah sent him from God, assuring him that God would plead his cause against the king of Assyria, *ver. 6, 7.* (4.) An abusive letter which the king of Assyria sent to Hezekiah, to the same purpose with Rabshakeh's speech, *ver. 8-13.* (5.) Hezekiah's humble prayer to God upon the receipt of this letter, *ver. 14-20.* (6.) The farther full answer which God sent him by Isaiah, promising him that his affairs should shortly take a happy turn, that the storm should blow over, and every thing should appear bright and serene, *ver. 2-35.* (7.) The immediate accomplishment of this prophecy in the ruin of his army, *ver. 36.* and the murder of himself, *ver. 37, 38.* All which was largely opened, *2 Kings xix.*

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD. 2. And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. 3. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. 4. It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left. 5. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6. ¶ And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

We may observe here,

1. That the best way to baffle the malicious designs of our enemies against us, is to be driven by them to God and to do our duty, and to fetch meat out of the eater. Rabshakeh intended to frighten Hezekiah from the Lord, but it proves that he frightens him to the Lord. The wind, instead of forcing the traveller's coat from him, makes him wrap it the closer about him. The more Rabshakeh reproacheth God, the more Hezekiah studies to honour him, by rendering his clothes for the dishonour done to him, and attending in his sanctuary to know his mind.

2. That it well becomes great men to desire the prayers of good men and good ministers. Hezekiah sent messengers, and honourable ones, those of the first rank, to Isaiah to desire his prayers, remembering how much his prophecies of late had plainly looked toward the events of the present day; in dependence upon which it is probable, he doubted not but that the issue would

would be comfortable, yet he would have it to be so in answer to prayer; *This is a day of trouble*, therefore let it be a day of prayer.

3. When we are most at a plunge, we should be most earnest in prayer: Now the children are brought to the birth, but there is not strength to bring forth; now let prayer come and help at a dead list; when pains are most strong, let prayers be most lively; and when we meet with the greatest difficulties, then it is a time to stir up ourselves only, but others also to take hold on God. Prayer is the midwife of mercy, that helps to bring it forth.

4. It is an encouragement to pray, though we have but some hopes of mercy, *ver. 4. It may be the Lord thy God will hear; who knows but he will return and repent?* Then it may be of the prospect of the haven of blessings, should quicken us with double diligence to ply the oar of prayer.

5. When there is a remnant left, and but a remnant, it concerns us to lift up a prayer for that remnant, *ver. 4. The prayer that reacheth heaven must be lifted up by a strong faith, earnest desires, and a direct intention to the glory of God: All which should be quickened when we are to come to the last stake.*

6. Those that have made God their enemy we have no reason to be afraid of, for they are marked for ruin; and though they may hiss, they cannot hurt; Rabshakeh hath blasphemed God, and therefore let not Hezekiah be afraid of him, *ver. 6. He has made God a party to the cause by his invectives, and therefore judgment will certainly be given against him: God will plead his own cause.*

7. Sinners fears are but prefaces to their falls; he shall hear the rumour of the slaughter of his army, which shall oblige him to retire to his own land, and there he shall be slain, *ver. 7. The terrors that pursue him shall bring him at last to the king of terrors, Job xviii. 11—14. The curses that come upon sinners, shall overtake them.*

8. ¶ So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish. 9. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10. Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trusteth, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered? 12. Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden, which were in Telfassar: 13. Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivah? 14. ¶ And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. 15. And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying, 16. O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: Thou hast made heaven and earth. 17. Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he hath sent to reproach the living God. 18. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries. 19. And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. 20. Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only.

We may observe here,

1. That if God gives us inward satisfaction in his promise, that may confirm us in our silent bearing of reproaches. God answered Hezekiah, but it doth not appear that he, after deliberation, sent any answer to Rabshakeh; but God having taken the work into his own hands, he quietly left the matter with him. So Rabshakeh returned to the king his matter for fresh instructions.

2. Those that delight in war, shall have enough of it. Sennacherib, without provocation given to him, or warning given by him, went forth to war against Judah; and now with as great surprise the king of Ethiopia goes forth to war against him, *ver. 9. They that are quarrelsome may expect to be quarrelled with; and God sometimes checks the rage of his enemies by giving it a powerful diversion.*

3. It is bad to talk proudly and profanely, but it is worse to write so, for that argues more deliberation and design: And what is written spreads farther and lasts longer, and doth the more mischief; atheism and irreligion written, will certainly be reckoned for another day.

4. Great successes often hardens sinners hearts in their sinful ways, and make them the more daring. Because the kings of Assyria have destroyed all lands (yet, alas; there were but few that fell within their reach) therefore they doubt not but to destroy God's land; because the gods of the nations were unable to help, they conclude the God of Israel is so; because the idolatrous king of Hamah and Arphad became an easy prey to them, therefore the religious, reforming king of Judah must needs be so too. Thus is this proud man ripened to ruin by the sun-shine of prosperity.

5. Liberty of access to the throne of grace and liberty of speech there, is the unspeakable privilege of the Lord's people at all times, especially in times of distress and danger. Hezekiah took Sennacherib's letter and spread it before the Lord; not designing to make any other complaints against him, but what were grounded upon his own hand-writing; let the thing speak itself, here it is in black and white: *Open thine eyes, O Lord, and see.* God allows his praying people to be humbly free with him; to utter all their words, as Jephthah did before him, to spread the letter, whe-

ther of a friend or an enemy before him, and leave the contents, the concern of it, with him.

6. The great and fundamental principles of our religion applied by faith, and improved in prayer, will be of sovereign use to us in our particular exigencies and distresses whatever they are; to them therefore we must have recourse, and abide by them; so Hezekiah did here. He encouraged himself with this, that the God of Israel is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts; of the hosts of Israel to animate them; of the hosts of their enemies, to dispirit and restrain them: that he is the God alone, and there is none that can stand in competition with him; that he is the God of all the kingdoms of the earth, and disposeth of them all as he pleaseth, for he made heaven and earth: and therefore both can do any thing, and doth every thing.

7. When we are afraid of men that are great destroyers, we may with humble boldness appeal to God as the great Saviour. They have indeed destroyed the nations, who had thrown themselves out of the protection of the true God by worshipping false gods; but the Lord, the God alone, is our God, our King, our Lawgiver, and he will save us, who is the Saviour of them that believe.

8. We have enough to take hold of in our wrestling with God by prayer, if we can but plead that his glory is interested in our case; that his name will be profaned if we are run down, and glorified if we are relieved. Thence therefore will our most prevailing pleas be drawn, do it for thy glory sake.

21. ¶ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: 22. This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. 23. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed; and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel. 24. By thy servants hast thou reproached the LORD, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon: and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel. 25. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places. 26. Hast thou not heard long ago, how have I done it: and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps. 27. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up. 28. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. 29. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. 30. And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. 31. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward: 32. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this. 33. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. 34. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD. 35. For I will defend this city, to save it for mine own sake and for my servant David's sake. 36. ¶ Then the angel of the LORD went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses. 27. ¶ So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. 38. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezar his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

We may here observe,

1. That those who receive messages of terror from men with patience, and send messages of faith to God by prayer, may expect messages of grace and peace from God for their comfort, then when they are most cast down. Isaiah sent a long answer to Hezekiah's prayer in God's name, sent it in writing, for it was too long to be sent by word of mouth, and sent it by way of return to his prayer, relation being thereunto had; *Whereas thou hast prayed to me*, know for thy comfort thy prayer is heard. Isaiah might have referred him to the prophecies, he had delivered, particularly that *chap. x.* and bid him pick out an answer from thence: but that he might have abundant

sent consolation, a message is sent him on purpose. The correspondence between earth and heaven is never let fall on God's side.

2. Those that magnify themselves, especially that magnify themselves against God and his people, do really vilify themselves, and make themselves contemptible in the eyes of all wise men: *The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised Sennacherib and all his impotent malice and menaces*; she knows while she preserves her integrity she is sure of the divine protection; and though he may bark he cannot bite: All his threats are a jest, it is all but *brutum fulmen*.

3. Those that abuse the people of God affront God himself; and he takes what is said and done against them, as said and done against himself, *Whom hast thou reproached? even the Holy One of Israel*: whom thou hast therefore reproached, because he is a Holy One. And it aggravated the indignity Sennacherib did to God; that he not only reproached him himself; but set his servants on to do it; *by thy servants, the objects, thou hast reproached me*.

4. They that brag of themselves and their own achievements, reflect upon God and his providence, *Thou hast said, I have digged, and drunk water*; I have done mighty feats and will do more, and will not own that I have done it, ver. 24-26. The most active men are no more than God makes them, and God makes them no more than of old he designed to make them; *What I have formed of ancient times, in an eternal counsel, now have I brought to pass* (for God doth all according to the counsel of his will) *that thou shouldst be to waste defended cities*; it is therefore intolerable arrogance to make it thine own doing.

5. All the malice and all the motions and projects of the church's enemies, are under the cognizance and check of the church's God. Sennacherib was active and quick, here and there and every where, but God knew his going out and coming in, and had always an eye upon him, ver. 28. And that was not all, he had a hand upon him too, a strict hand, a strong hand; *a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his lips*: with which, though he was very headstrong and unruly, he could and would turn him back by the way he came, ver. 29. *Hitherto he shall come and no further*. God had signed Sennacherib's commission against Judah, chap. x. 6. here he supercedes it; he has frightened them, but he must not hurt them, and therefore is discharged from going any further; nay, his commitment is here signed, by which he is clapped up to answer for what he had done beyond his commission.

6. God is his people's bountiful benefactor, as well as their powerful protector; both a sun and shield to those that trust in him. Jerusalem shall be defended, ver. 35. the besiegers shall not come into it; no not come before it with any regular attack, but they shall be routed before they begin the siege, ver. 33. But this is not all, God will return in mercy to his people, and will do them good; Their land shall be more than ordinary fruitful, so as that their losses should be abundantly repaired; they shall not feel any of the ill effects either of the enemies wasting the country, or of their own being taken off from husbanding. But the earth, as at first, shall bring forth of itself, and they shall live, and live plentifully upon its spontaneous products: The blessings of the Lord can, when he pleaseth, make rich without the hand of the diligent. And let them not think that the desolations of their country would excuse them from observing the sabbatical year, which happened (as it should seem) the year after, and when they were not to plough or sow, no though they had not now their usual stock beforehand for that year; yet they must religiously observe it, and depend upon God to provide for them. God must be trusted in the way of duty.

7. There is no standing before the judgments of God when they come with commission. (1.) The greatest numbers cannot stand before them; one angel shall in one night lay a vast army of men dead upon the spot, when God commissions him to do so, ver. 36. Here is an hundred and eighty-five thousand brave soldiers in an instant turned into so many dead corpses. Many think the seventy-sixth psalm was penned upon occasion of this defeat; where from the spoiling of the stout hearted, and sending them to sleep their long sleep, ver. 5. it is inferred, that God is more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey, ver. 4. and that he, even he, is to be feared, ver. 7. Angels are employed more than we are aware of as ministers of God's justice, to punish the pride and break the power of wicked men. (2.) The greatest men cannot stand before them. *The great king, the king of Assyria*, looks very little when he is forced to return, not only with shame, because he cannot accomplish what he had projected with so much assurance; but with terror and fear, lest the angel that had destroyed his army should destroy him; yet he is made to look less when his own sons, that should have guarded him, sacrificed him to his idol, whose protection he sought, ver. 37, 38. God can quickly stop their breath, that breathe out threatenings and slaughter against his people, and will do it when they have filled up the measure of their iniquity; and the Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth, known to be a God that resists the proud. Many prophecies were fulfilled in this province; which should encourage us as far as they look farther and are designed as common and general assurances of the safety of the church and of all that trust in God, to depend upon God for the accomplishment of them. He that has delivered, doth and will: Lord, forgive our enemies; but, *so let all thine enemies perish, O Lord*.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

This chapter proceeds to the history of Hezekiah; Here is, (1.) His sickness, and the sentence of death he received within himself, ver. 1. (2.) his prayer in his sickness, ver. 2, 3. (3.) The answer of peace which God gave to that prayer, assuring him that he should recover, that he should live fifteen years yet, that Jerusalem should be delivered from the king of Assyria; and that for a sign to confirm his faith herein, the sun should go back ten degrees, ver. 4-8. And this we read and opened before, 2 Kings xx. 1. &c. But (4.) Here is Hezekiah's thanksgivings for his recovery, which we had not before, ver. 9-20. To which is added, the means used, ver. 21. and the end the good man aimed at in desiring to recover, ver. 22. This is a chapter which will entertain the thoughts, direct the devotions, and encourage the faith and hopes of those that are confined by bodily distempers; it visits those that are visited with sickness.

1. **I**N those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live. 2. Then Hezekiah turned his face towards the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, 3. And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. 4. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah saying, 5. Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus

saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. 6. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. 7. And this shall be a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken: 8. Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the Sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

We may hence observe among others these good lessons:

1. That neither men's greatness nor goodness will exempt them from the arrests of sickness and death. Hezekiah, a mighty potentate on earth and a mighty favourite in heaven is struck with a disease, which without a miracle will certainly be mortal; and this is in the midst of his days, his comforts, and usefulness: *Lord, behold, him whom thou lovest is sick*. It should seem this sickness seized him when he was in the midst of his triumphs over the ruined army of the Assyrians, to teach us always to rejoice with trembling.

2. It concerns us to prepare when we see death approaching; *set thy house in order*, and thy heart especially; put both thine affections and thine affairs into the best posture thou canst, that when the Lord comes, thou mayest be found of him in peace with God, with thine own conscience and with all men, and mayest have nothing else to do but to die. Our being ready for death will make it come never the sooner, but much the earlier: and those that are fit to die are most fit to live.

3. Is any afflicted with sickness? *let him pray*, James v. 13. Prayer is a salve for every sore, personal or public; when Hezekiah was distressed by his enemies he prayed, now he was sick he prayed. Whither should the child go when any thing ails him but to his father? Afflictions are sent to bring us to our Bible and to our knees. When Hezekiah was in health he went up to the house of the Lord to pray, for that was then the house of prayer. When he was sick in bed, he turned his face towards the wall: probably towards the temple, which was a type of Christ, to whom we must look by faith in every prayer.

4. The testimony of our consciences, for us, that by the grace of God we have lived a good life, and have walked closely and humbly with God, will be a great support and comfort to us when we come to look death in the face. And though we may not depend upon it as our righteousness, by which to be justified before God, yet we may humbly plead it as an evidence of our interest in the righteousness of the Mediator. Hezekiah doth not demand a reward from God for his good services, but modestly begs that God would remember, not how he had reformed the kingdom, taken away the high places, cleansed the temple, and revived neglected ordinances; but, which was better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices, how he had approved himself to God with a single eye and an honest heart, not only in these eminent performances, but in an even, regular course of holy living: *I have walked before thee in truth and sincerity, and with a perfect heart*, that is, an upright heart: for uprightness is our gospel perfection.

5. God has a gracious ear open to the prayers of his afflicted people. The same prophet that was sent to Hezekiah for warning to prepare for death, is sent to him with a promise that he should not only recover, but be restored to a confirmed state of health, and live fifteen years yet. As Jerusalem was distressed, so Hezekiah was diseased, that God might have the glory of the deliverance of both, and that prayer too might have the honour of being instrumental in the deliverance. When we pray in our sickness, though God sends not to us such an answer as he here sent to Hezekiah; yet if by his Spirit he bids us be of good cheer, assures us that our sins are forgiven us, that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and that whether we live or die we shall be his, we have no reason to say that we pray in vain. God answers us if he *strengthens us with strength in our souls*, though not with bodily strength, Psal. cxxxviii. 3.

6. A good man cannot take much comfort in his own health and prosperity, unless he see the welfare and prosperity of the church of God. Therefore God knowing what lay near Hezekiah's heart, promised him not only that he should live, but that he should see the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life, Psal. cxxviii. 5. or otherwise he cannot live comfortably. Jerusalem that is now delivered, shall still be defended from the Assyrians, who perhaps threatened to rally again and renew the attack. Thus doth God graciously provide to make Hezekiah upon all accounts easy.

7. God is willing to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that they may have an unshaken faith in it, and therewith a strong consolation, God hath given Hezekiah repeated assurances of his favour; and yet, as if it were thought too little, that he might expect from him uncommon favours, a sign is given him, an uncommon sign. None that we know of having had an absolute promise, of living such a certain number of years to come as Hezekiah had. God thought fit to confirm this unprecedented favour with a miracle. The sign was the going back of the shadow upon the sun-dial; the sun is a faithful measure of time, and rejoiceth us a strong man to run a race; but he that set that clock a going, can let it back when he pleaseth and make it to return: for the Father of all lights is the director of them.

9. ¶ The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness: 10. I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. 11. I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. 12. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent; I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. 13. I reckoned till morning, that as a lion, so will he break all my bones; from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. 14. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward; O LORD, I am oppressed, undertake for me. 15. What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly

softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul: 16. O LORD, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. 17. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. 18. For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. 19. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. 20. The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD, 21. For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover. 22. Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign, that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

We have here Hezekiah's thanksgiving song, which he penned by divine direction after his recovery. He might have taken some of the psalms of his father David, and have made use of them for this purpose; he might have found many very pertinent ones. He appointed the Levites to praise the LORD with the words of David, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. But the occasion here was extraordinary, and his heart being full of devout affections, he would not confine himself to the compositions he had, though of divine inspiration; but would offer up his affections in his own words, which is most natural and genuine. He put this thanksgiving in writing, that he might review it himself afterwards, for the reviving of the good impressions made upon him by the providence, and that it might be recommended to others also for their use upon the like occasion. Note, There are writings which it is proper for us to draw up after we have been sick and are recovered. It is good to write a memorial of the affliction and of the frame of our hearts under it, to keep a record of the thoughts we had of things when we were sick, the affections that were then working in us: to write a memorial of the mercies of a sick bed and of our release from it, that they may never be forgotten: to write a thanksgiving to God, write a sure covenant with him and seal it, give it under our hands that we will never return again to folly. It is an excellent writing which Hezekiah here left upon his recovery; and yet we find, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. that he rendered not again according to the benefit done to him. The impressions one would have thought should never have worn off, and yet it seems they did. Thanksgiving is good; but thanks-living is better.

Now in this writing he preserves upon record,

1. The deplorable condition he was in when his disease prevailed, and his despair of recovery, ver. 10—13. He tells us what his thoughts were of himself when he was at the worst: and these he keeps in remembrance; (1.) As blaming himself for his despondency, and that he gave up himself for gone; whereas while there is life there is hope, and room for our prayer and God's mercy. Though it is good to construe sickness as a summons to the grave, so as thereby to be quickened in our preparation for another world: yet we ought not to make the worst of our case, nor to think that every sick man must needs be a dead man presently. He that brings low can raise up. Or, (2.) As minding himself of the apprehensions he had of death approaching, that he might always know and consider his own frailty and mortality; and that though he had a reprieve for fifteen years, it was but a reprieve, and the fatal stroke he had now such a dread of would certainly come at last. Or, (3.) As magnifying the power of God in recovering him when his case was desperate, and his goodness in being so much better to him than his own fears. Thus David sometimes when he was delivered out of trouble, reflected upon the black and melancholy conclusions he had made upon his own case when he was in trouble; and what he had then said in his haste, as Psal. xxxi. 22.—lxxvii. 7, 8, 9.

Let us see what Hezekiah's thoughts were of himself were:

1. He reckoned that the number of his months was cut off in the midst: he was now about thirty-nine or forty years of age, and when he had a fair prospect of many years and happy ones, very happy, very many before him. This distemper that suddenly seized him, he concluded would be the cutting off of his days; that he should now be deprived of the residue of his years, which in a course of nature he might have lived; not which he could command as a debt due to him, but which he had reason to expect, considering the strength of his constitution: and with them he should be deprived not only of the comforts of life, but of all the opportunities he had of serving God and his generation. To the same purpose, ver. 12. *Mine age is departed* and gone, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent; out of which I am forcibly dislodged by the pulling of it down in an instant. Our present residence is but like that of a shepherd in his tent, a poor, and mean, and cold lodging, where we are upon duty and with a trust committed to our charge, as the shepherd hath, of which we must give an account, and which will easily be taken down by the drawing of one pin or two. But observe, It is not the final period of our age, but only the removal of it to another world, where the tents of Kedar that are taken down, coarse, and black, and weather-beaten, shall be set up again in the New Jerusalem, *comely as the curtains of Solomon*. He adds another simile, *I have cut off like a weaver my life*, not that he did by any act of his own cut off the thread of his life; but being told that he must needs die, he was forced to cut off all his designs and projects, his purposes were broken off, even the thoughts of his heart, as Job's were, chap. xvii. 11. Our days are compared to the weaver's shuttle, Job vii. 6. passing and repassing very swiftly, and every throw leaving a thread behind it; and when they are finished, the thread is cut off, and the piece taken out of the loom and shewed to our master, to be judged of whether it be well woven or no, that we may receive according to the things done in the body. But as the weaver when he has cut off his threads, has done his work and his toil is over, so a good man when his life is cut off, his cares and fatigues are cut off with it, and he rests from his labours. But did I say, *I have cut off my life*? no, my times are not in mine own hand, they are in God's hand, and it is he that will cut me off from the thrum, so the margin reads it; he has appointed what shall be the length of the piece, and when it comes to that length he will cut it off.

2. He reckoned that he should go to the gates of the grave; to the grave, the gates of which are always open; for it is still crying, Give, give. The grave is here put not only for the sepulchres of his fathers, in which his body would be deposited with a great deal of pomp and magnificence, for he was buried in the chief of the sepulchres of the kings, and all Judah did him honour at his death, 2 Chron. xxxii. 33. which yet he himself took

no care of nor gave any order about when he was sick; but for the state of the dead, that is the *sheol*, the *hades*, the invisible world to which he saw his soul going.

3. He reckoned that he was deprived of all the opportunities he might have had of worshipping God and doing good in the world, ver. 11. *I said, (1.) I shall not see the Lord*, as he manifests himself in his temple, in his oracles and ordinances, even the Lord here in the land of the living. He hopes to see him on the other side death, but he despairs of seeing him any more on this side death, as he had seen him in the sanctuary, Psal. lxxiii. 2. He shall no more see, i. e. serve the Lord in the land of the living, the land of conflict, between his kingdom and the kingdom of Satan, this seat of war. He harps much upon this, *I shall no more see the Lord, even the Lord*; for a good man wisheth not to live for any other end, but that he may serve God and have communion with him. (2.) *I shall see man no more*. He shall see his subjects no more, whom he may protect and administer justice to; shall see no more objects of charity whom he may relieve; shall see his friends no more, who were often sharpened by his countenance, as iron is by iron. Death puts an end to conversation, and removes our acquaintance into darkness, Psal. lxxviii. 18.

4. He reckoned that the agonies of death would be very sharp and severe; he will cut me off with pining sickness, which will waste me and wear me off apace. The distemper increased so fast, without intermission or remission, either day or night, morning or evening, that he concluded it would come to a crisis presently and make an end of him. That God, whose servants all diseases are, would by them, as a lion, break all his bones with grinding pain, ver. 13. He thought next morning was the utmost he could expect to live in such pain and misery; when he had outlived the first day's illness, the second day he repeated his fears, and concluded this must needs be his last night; *from day even till night will he make an end of me*. When we are sick we are very apt to be thus calculating our time, and after all we are still at uncertainty. I should be more our care how we should get safe to another world, than how long we are likely to live in this world.

2. The complaints he made in this condition, ver. 14. *Like a crane or swallow so did I chatter*: I make a noise as those birds do when they are frightened. See what change sickness makes in a little time; he that but the other day spoke with so much freedom and majesty, now through the extremity of pain or deficiency in spirits, chatters like a crane or a swallow. Some think he refers to his praying in his affliction; it was so broken and interrupted with groanings that could not be uttered, that it was more like the chattering of a crane or a swallow than what it used to be. Such mean thoughts had he of his own prayers, which yet were acceptable to God and successful. He mourned like a dove, sadly, but silently and patiently. He found God so ready to answer his prayers at other times, that he could not but look upwards in expectation of some relief now; but in vain, his eyes failed, and he saw no hopeful symptom, nor felt any abatement of his distemper; and therefore he prays, *I am oppressed*, quite overpowered and ready to sink, *Lord, undertake for me*, bail me out of the hands of this serjeant that has arrested me; *be surety for thy servant for good*, Psal. cxix. 122. Come between me and the gates of the grave, to which I am ready to be hurried. When we recover from sickness, the divine pity doth as it were beg a day for us, and undertakes we shall be forth-coming another time, and answer the debt in full. And when we receive the sentence of death within ourselves, we are undone if the divine grace do not undertake for us to carry us through the valley of the shadow of death, and to preserve us blameless to the heavenly kingdom on the other side of it. If Christ do not undertake for us to bring us off in the judgment and present us to his Father, and to do all that for us which we need and cannot do for ourselves. *I am oppressed, ease me*, so some read it, for when we are tossed with sense of guilt and fear of wrath, nothing will make us easy but Christ's undertaking for us.

3. The grateful acknowledgment he makes of God's goodness to him in his recovery. He begins this part of writing as one at a stand how to express himself, ver. 15. *What shall I say?* Why should I say so much by way of complaint, when this is enough to silence all my complaints, he hath spoken unto me, he hath sent his prophet to tell me that I shall recover and live fifteen years yet; and himself hath done it, it is as sure to be done as if it were done already; what God hath spoken he will himself do, for no word of his shall fall to the ground. God having spoken it, he is sure of it, ver. 16. *Thou wilt recover me, and make me to live*; not only recover me from this illness, but make me to live through the years allotted me. And having this hope,

1. He promiseth himself always to retain the impressions of his affliction, ver. 15. *I will go softly all my years, in the bitterness of my soul*; as one in sorrow for my sinful distrusts and murmurings under my affliction; as one in care to make suitable returns for God's favour to me, and to make it appear I have got good by the providences I have been under. I will go softly, i. e. gravely and considerately, and with thought and deliberation, not as many who when they are recovered live as carelessly and as much at large as ever. Or I will go pleasantly, so some understand it; when God has delivered me, I will walk cheerfully with him in all holy conversation, as having tasted that he is gracious. Or I will go softly, i. e. mournfully in the bitterness of my soul for my sins. Or I will go softly, even after the bitterness of my soul, so it may be read; when the trouble is over I will endeavour to retain the impression of it, and to have the same thoughts of things I had then.

2. He will encourage himself and others with the experiences he had had of the goodness of God, ver. 16. By these things which thou hast done for me they live, the kingdom lives; for the life of such a king was the life of the kingdom; all that hear of it shall live and be comforted; by the same power and goodness that hath recovered me, all men have their souls held in life, and they ought to acknowledge it. In all these things is the life of my spirit, i. e. my spiritual life, that is supported and maintained by what God has done for the preservation of my natural life. The more we taste of the loving-kindness of God in every providence, the more will our hearts be enlarged to love him and live to him, and that will be the life of our spirit. Thus our souls live, and they shall praise him.

3. He magnifies the mercy of his recovery on several accounts:

1. That he was raised up from great extremity, ver. 17. *Behold for peace I had great bitterness*. When upon the defeat of Sennacherib he expected nothing but an uninterrupted peace to himself and his government, he was suddenly seized with sickness which embittered all his comforts to him; and went to that height that it seemed to be the bitterness of death itself, *bitterness, bitterness*, nothing but gall and wormwood. This was his condition when God sent him seasonable relief.

2. That it came from the love of God, from love to his soul. Some are spared and reprieved in wrath, that they may be reserved for some greater judgment when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities: but temporal mercies are then sweet indeed to us when we can taste the love of God in them; he delivered me because he delighted in me, Psalm xlviii. 19. and the word here signifies a very affectionate love: *Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of corruption*, so it runs in the original; God's love is sufficient

to bring a soul from the pit of corruption. This is applicable to our redemption by Christ; it was in love to our souls, our poor, perishing souls, that he delivered them from the bottomless pit, snatched them as brands out of everlasting burnings; in his love and in his pity he redeemed us. And the preservation of our bodies and the provision made for them is then doubly comfortable, when it is in love to our souls; when God repairs the house because he has a kindness for the inhabitant.

3. That it was the product and effect of the pardon of sin; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back, and thereby hast delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, in love to it. Note, 1. When God pardons sin he casts it behind his back, as not desiring to look upon it with an eye of justice and jealousy; he remembers it no more to visit for it: the pardon doth not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin, but not to be punished as it deserves. When we cast our sins behind our back, and take no care to repent of them, God sets them before his face and is ready to reckon for them; but when we set them before our face in true repentance, as David did when his sin was ever before him, God casts them behind his back. 2. When God pardons sins he pardons all, casts them all behind his back, though they have been as scarlet and crimson. 3. The pardoning of the sin is the delivering of the soul from the pit of corruption. 4. It is then pleasant to think of our recoveries from sickness, when we see them flowing from the remission of sin; then the cause is removed, and then it is in love to the soul.

4. That it was the lengthening out of his opportunity to glorify God in this world, which he made the business, and pleasure, and end of life.

1. If this sickness had been his death, it had put a period to that course of service for the glory of God and the good of the church he was now in. ver. 18. Heaven indeed praiseth God, and the souls of the faithful when at death they remove thither, do that work of heaven as the angels and with the angels there; but what is this world the better for that? What doth that contribute to the support and advancement of God's kingdom among men in this state of struggle? The grave cannot praise God, nor the dead bodies that lie there; death cannot celebrate him, cannot proclaim his perfections and favours, to invite others into his service. *They who go down to the pit*, being no longer in a state of probation, nor living by faith in his promises, cannot give him honour by hoping for his truth. They that lie rotting in the grave, as they are not capable of receiving any farther mercy from God, so neither of offering any more praises to him, till they shall be raised at the last day, and then they shall both receive and give glory.

2. Being recovered from it, he resolves not only to proceed but to abound in praising and serving God, ver. 19. *The living, the living, he shall praise thee.* They may do it, they have an opportunity of praising God, and that is the main thing that makes life valuable and desirable to a good man. Hezekiah was therefore glad to live, not that he might continue to enjoy his royal dignity, and the honour and pleasure of his late successes, but that he might continue to praise God. The living must praise God, they live in vain if they do not. They that have been dying and yet are living, whose life is life from the dead, are in a special manner obliged to praise God, as being most sensibly affected with his goodness. Hezekiah for his part being recovered from this sickness, will make it his business to praise God. *I do it this day*, let others do it in like manner. They that give good exhortations should set good examples, and do themselves what they expect from others. For my part, saith Hezekiah, *the Lord was ready to save me*; he not only did save me, but he was ready to do it, just then when I was in the greatest extremity, his help came in seasonably; he shewed himself willing and forward to save me: *the Lord was to save me*, was at hand to do it, saved me at first word; and therefore,

1. I will publish and proclaim his praises; I and my family, I and my friends, I and my people, will have a concert of praise to his glory; *we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments*, that others may attend to them and be affected with them, when they are in the most devout and serious frame in the house of the Lord. It is for the honour of God and the edification of his church, that special mercies should be acknowledged in public praises, especially mercies to public persons, *Psal. cxvi. 18, 19.*

2. I will proceed and persevere in his praises; we will do it all the days of our life, because every day of our life is itself a fresh mercy and brings many fresh mercies along with it; and as renewed mercies call for renewed praises, so former eminent mercies call for repeated praises. It is by the mercy of God that we live, and therefore as long as we live we must continue to praise him, while we have breath, nay while we have being.

3. I will propagate and perpetuate his praises; we will not only do it all the days of our life, but *the father to the children shall make known his truth*, that the ages to come may give God the glory of his truth by trusting to it. It is the duty of parents to possess their children with a confidence in the truth of God, which will go far towards keeping them close to the ways of God. Hezekiah doubtless did this himself, and yet Manasseh his son walked not in his steps. Parents may give their children many good things: good instructions, good examples, good books, but they cannot give them grace.

In the two last verses of this chapter we have two passages relating to this story, which were omitted in the narrative of it here, but which we had, 2 Kings xx. and therefore shall here only observe two lessons from them:

1. That God's promises are intended not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage the use of means; Hezekiah is sure to recover, and yet he must take a lump of figs and lay it on the boil, ver. 21. We do not trust God but tempt him, if when we pray for help, we do not second our prayers with our endeavours. We must not put physicians or physic in the place of God, but make use of them in subordination to God and to his providence; help thyself and God will help thee.

2. That the chief end we should aim at in desiring life and health is that we may glorify God and do good, and improve ourselves in knowledge, and grace, and meetness for heaven. Hezekiah when he meant what is the sign that I shall recover, asked, *What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?* there to honour God, to keep up his acquaintance and communion with him, and to encourage others to serve him, ver. 22. It is taken for granted that if God would restore him to health he would presently go up to the temple with his thank-offerings; there Christ found the impotent man whom he had healed, *John v. 14.* The exercises of religion are so much the business and delight of a good man, that to be restrained from them is the greatest grievance of his afflictions, and to be restored to them is the greatest comfort of his deliverances. Let my soul live and it shall praise thee.

C H A P. XXXIX.

The story of this chapter likewise we had before, 2 Kings xx. 12, &c. It is here repeated, not only as a very memorable and improvable passage, but because he concludes with a prophecy of the captivity in Babylon: and as the former part of the prophecy of this book frequently referred to Sennacherib's invasion, and the defeat of that, to which therefore the

history of that was very fitly subjoined: so the latter part of this book speaks much of the Jews' captivity in Babylon, and their deliverance out of that, to which, therefore, the first prediction of it, with the occasion thereof is very fitly prefixed. We have here, (1.) The pride and folly of Hezekiah, in shewing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors that were sent to congratulate his recovery, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Isaiah's examination of him concerning it in God's name, and his confession of it, ver. 3, 4. (3.) The sentence passed upon him for it, that all his treasures should in process of time be carried to Babylon, ver. 5, 6, 7. (4.) Hezekiah's penitent and patient submission to this sentence, ver. 8.

1. **A**T that time Merodach-Baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. 2. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah shewed them not. 3. ¶ Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. 4. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

Hence we may learn these lessons:

1. That humanity and common civility teach us to rejoice with our friends and neighbours when they rejoice, and to congratulate their deliverances, and particularly their recoveries from sickness. The king of Babylon having heard that Hezekiah had been sick and was recovered, sent to compliment him upon the occasion. If Christians be unneighbourly, Heavens will shame them.

2. It becomes us to give honour to those whom our God puts honour upon. The sun was the Babylonians' God, and when they understood that it was with a respect to Hezekiah that the sun to their great surprise went back ten degrees such a day, they thought themselves obliged to do Hezekiah all the honour they could. Will all people thus walk in the name of their God, and shall not we?

3. Those that do not value good men for their goodness, yet may be brought to pay them great respects by other inducements, and for the sake of their secular interests. The king of Babylon made his court to Hezekiah here, not because he was pious, but because he was prosperous; as the Philistines coveted an alliance with Isaac because they saw the Lord was with him, *Gen. xxvi. 28.* The king of Babylon was an enemy to the king of Assyria, and therefore was fond of Hezekiah, because the Assyrians were so much weakened by the power of his God.

4. It is a hard matter to keep the spirit low in the midst of great advancements. Hezekiah is an instance of it: he was a wise and good man; but when one miracle after another was wrought in his favour, he found it hard to keep his heart from being lifted up, nay a little thing then drew him into the snare of pride. Blessed Paul himself needed a thorn in the flesh to keep him from being lifted up with the abundance of revelations.

5. We have need to watch over our own spirits when we are shewing our friends our possessions, what we have done, and what we have got, that we be not proud of them, as if our merit or our merit had purchased and procured us this wealth. When we look upon our enjoyments and have occasion to speak of them, it must be with humble acknowledgments of our unworthiness, and thankful acknowledgments of God's goodness, with a just value for others' achievements, and with an expectation of losses and changes; not dreaming that our mountain stands so strong but that it may soon be moved.

6. It is a great weakness for good men to value themselves much upon the civil respects that are paid them (yea, though there be something particular and uncommon in them) by the children of this world, and to be fond of their acquaintance. What a poor thing was it for Hezekiah, whom God had so dignified, to be thus over proud of the respects done him by a Heathen prince, as if those added any thing to him. We ought to return the courtesies of such with interest, but not to be proud of them.

7. We must expect to be called to an account for the workings of our pride, though they are secret, and in such instances as we thought there was no harm in; and therefore we ought to call our lives to an account for them; and when we have had company with us that has paid us respect, and been pleased with their entertainment, and commended every thing, to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, lest our hearts have been lifted up. And as far as we see cause to suspect that this sly and subtle sin of pride hath insinuated itself into our breasts, and mingled itself with our conversation, let us be ashamed of it, and, as Hezekiah here, ingenuously confess it, and take shame to ourselves for it.

5. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: 6. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 7. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 8. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

Hence let us observe,

1. That if God love us he will humble us, and will find some way or other to pull down our spirits when they are lifted up above measure: A mortifying message is sent to Hezekiah, that he might be humbled for the pride of his heart, and be convinced of the folly of it; for though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, as he did Hezekiah here, to prove him that he might know all that was in his heart, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it.

2. It is just with God to take that from us which we make the matter of our pride, and on which we build a carnal confidence. When David was proud of the numbers of his people, God took a course to make them fewer: and when Hezekiah boasts of his treasures, and looks upon them with too great a complacency, he is told he doth like the foolish traveller, that shews his money and gold to one that proves a thief, and is thereby tempted to rob him.

3. If we could but see things that will be, we should be ashamed of our thoughts of things that are. If Hezekiah had known that the seed and successors of this king of Babylon, would hereafter be the ruin of his family and kingdom, he would not have complimented his ambassadors as he did. And when the prophet told him it would be so, we may well imagine how he was vexed at himself for what he had done. We cannot certainly foresee what will be, but are told in general, *All is vanity*, and therefore it is vanity for us to take a complacency and put a confidence in any thing that goes under that character.

4. Those that are fond of an acquaintance and alliance with irreligious men, first or last will have enough of it, and will have cause to repent it. Hezekiah thought himself mighty happy in the friendship of Babylon, though it was the mother of harlots and idolatries; but Babylon, that now courted Jerusalem, in process of time conquered her and carried her captive. Leagues with sinners and leagues with sin too will end thus; it is therefore our wisdom to keep at a distance from them.

5. Those that truly repent of their sins will take it well to be reproved for them, and will be willing to be told of their faults. Hezekiah reckoned that word of the Lord good which discovered sin to him, and made him sensible that he had done amiss, which before he was not aware of. The language of true penitents is, *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness*; and the law is therefore good, because being spiritual in it sin appears sin, and exceeding sinful.

6. True penitents will quietly submit not only to the reproofs of the word, but to the rebukes of providence, for their sins. When Hezekiah was told of the punishment of his iniquity, he said, *Good is the word of the Lord*, not only the mitigation of the sentence good, but the sentence itself so; he hath nothing to object against the equity of it, but faith amen to the threatening. They that see the evil of sin, and what it deserves, will justify God in all that is brought upon them for it, and own that he punisheth them less than their iniquities deserve.

7. Though we must not be regardless of those that come after us, yet we must reckon ourselves well done for if there be *peace and truth in our days*, and better than we had reason to expect. If a storm be coming we must reckon it a favour to get into the harbour before it comes, and be gathered to the grave in peace: yet we can never be secure of this, but must prepare for changes in our own time, that we may stand complete in all the will of God, and bid it welcome whatever it is.

C H A P. XL.

At this chapter begins the latter part of the prophecy of this book, which is not only divided from the former by the historical chapters that come between, but seems to be distinguished from it in the scope and stile of it. In the former part the name of the prophet was frequently prefixed to the particular sermons, besides the general title at chap. ii. 1—vi. 3.—xiii. But this is all one continued discourse, and the prophet not so much as once named. That consisted of many burdens, many woes, this of many blessings. There the distress which the people of God were in by the Assyrians, and their deliverance out of that were chiefly prophesied of: but that is here spoken of as a thing past, chap. lii. 4. and the captivity in Babylon, and their deliverance out of that, which were much greater events, of more extensive and abiding concern, are here largely foretold. Before God sent his people into captivity, he furnished them with precious promises for their support and comfort in their trouble; and we may well imagine of what great use to them the glorious, gracious light of this prophecy was in that cloudy and dark day, and how much it helped to dry up their tears by the rivers of Babylon. But it looks further yet, and to greater things; much of Christ and gospel grace we meet with in the foregoing part of this book, but in this latter part we shall find much more; and as if it were designed for a prophetic summary of the New Testament, it begins with that which begins the gospels, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, chap. xl. 3. and concludes with that which concludes the book of the Revelation, the new heavens and the new earth, chap. lvi. 22. Even Mr. White acknowledgeth, that as all the mercies of God to the Jewish nation bore some resemblance to those glorious things performed by our Saviour for man's redemption, so they are by the Spirit of God expressed in such terms as shew plainly that while the prophet is speaking of the redemption of the Jews, he had in his thoughts a more glorious deliverance. And we need not look for any further accomplishment of these prophecies yet to come, for if Jesus be He and his kingdom be It that should come, we are to look for no other, but the carrying on and completing of the same blessed work which was begun in the first preaching and planting of Christianity in the world.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Orders given to preach and publish the glad tidings of redemption, ver. 1, 2. (2.) These glad tidings introduced by a voice in the wilderness, which gives assurance that all obstructions shall be removed, ver. 3, 4, 5. and that though all creatures fail and fade, the word of God shall be established and accomplished, ver. 6, 7, 8. (3.) A joyful prospect given to the people of God of the happiness which this redemption should bring along with it, ver. 9, 10, 11. (4.) The sovereignty and power of that God magnified, who undertakes to work out this redemption, ver. 12—17. (5.) Idols therefore triumphed over, and idolaters upbraided with their folly, ver. 18—26. (6.) A reproof given to the people of God for their fears and despondencies, and enough said in a few words to silence those fears, ver. 27—31. And we through patience and comfort of this scripture may hope.

1. **C**OMFORT ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

We have here the commission and instructions given, not to this prophet only, but with him to all the Lord's prophets, nay, and to all Christ's ministers, to proclaim comfort to God's people. (1.) This did not only warrant but enjoin this prophet himself to encourage the good people who lived in his own time, who could not have but very melancholy apprehensions of things, when they saw Judah and Jerusalem by their daring impieties ripening apace for ruin, and God in his providence hastening ruin

upon them. Let them be sure that for all this God had mercy in store for them. (2.) It was especially a direction to the prophets that should live in the time of the captivity, when Jerusalem was in ruins; they must encourage the captives to hope for enlargement in due time. (3.) Gospel-ministers being employed by the blessed spirit as a comforter and as helpers of the joy of Christians, are here put in mind of their business. Here is,

1. Comfortable words directed to God's people in general, ver. 1. The prophets have instructions from their God (for he is the *Lord God of the holy prophets*, Rev. xxii. 6.) to comfort the people of God; and the charge is doubled, *Comfort ye, Comfort ye*, not so much because the prophets are unwilling to do it, no, it is the most pleasant part of the work; but because sometimes the souls of God's people refuse to be comforted, and the comforters must repeat things again and again, ere they can fasten any thing upon them. Observe here, (1.) There are a people in the world that are God's people. (2.) It is the will of God that his people should be a comforted people, even in the worst of times. (3.) It is the work and business of ministers to do what they can for the comfort of God's people. (4.) Words of conviction, such as we had in the former part of this book, must be followed with words of comfort, such as we have here; for he that hath torn will heal us.

2. Comfortable words directed to Jerusalem in particular; *Speak to the heart of Jerusalem*, ver. 2. Speak that which will revive her heart and be a cordial to her, and to all that belong to her and wish her well. Do not whisper it, but cry unto her, cry aloud, to shew saints their comforts as well as to shew sinners their transgressions; make her hear it. (1.) That the days of her trouble are numbered and finished; her warfare is accomplished, the set time of her servitude: the campaign is now at an end, and she shall retire into quarters of refreshment. The human life is a warfare, *Job vii. 1.* the Christian life much more; but the struggle will not last always, the warfare will be accomplished, and then the good soldiers shall not only enter into rest, but be sure of their pay. (2.) That the cause of her trouble is removed, and when that is taken away the effect will cease. Tell her that her iniquity is pardoned: God is reconciled to her, and she shall no longer be treated as one guilty before him. Nothing can be spoken more comfortably than this, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee*. Troubles are then removed in love when sin is pardoned. (3.) That the end of her trouble is answered; *She has received of the Lord double for the cure of all her sins*, sufficient and more than sufficient to part between her and her idols, the worship of which was the great sin for which God had a controversy with them, and from which he designed to reclaim them by their captivity in Babylon; and it had that effect upon them, it begat in them a rooted antipathy to idolatry, and was physick doubly strong for the purging out of that iniquity. Or it may be taken as the language of the divine compassion; *His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*, Judges x. 16. and like a tender father, *Since he spake against them he earnestly remembered them*, Jer. xxxi. 20. and was ready to say he had given them too much correction. They being very penitent acknowledged that God had punished them less than their iniquities deserved: but he being very pitiful, owned that he had punished them more than they deserved. True penitents have indeed in Christ and his sufferings received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins; for the satisfaction Christ made by his death, was of such an infinite value, that it was more than double to the demerits of sin; for God spared not his son.

3. ¶ The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. 6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the godliness thereof is as the flower of the field: 7. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. 8. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

The time to favour Zion, yea, the set time being come, the people of God must be prepared for the favours designed them by repentance and faith, and to call them to both these we have here the voice of one crying in the wilderness; which may be applied to those prophets who were with the captives in their wilderness-state, and when they saw the day of their deliverance dawn called earnestly upon them to prepare for it, and assured them, all the difficulties that stood in the way of their deliverance should be got over. It is a good sign mercy is in the preparing for us, if we find God's grace preparing us for it, *Psal. x. 17.* But it must be applied to John the Baptist; for though God was the speaker, he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and his business was to prepare the way of the Lord, to dispose men's minds for the reception and entertainment of the gospel of Christ. *The way of the Lord is prepared.*

1. By repentance for sin, that was it which John the Baptist preached to all Judah and Jerusalem, *Matt. iii. 2, 3.* and thereby made ready a people prepared for the Lord, *Luke i. 17.* The alarm is given, let all take notice of it at their peril; God is coming in a way of mercy, and we must prepare for him, ver. 3, 4, 5. Applying it to their captivity, it may be taken as a promise that whatever difficulties lie in their way, when they return they shall be removed. This voice in the wilderness (divine power going along with it) sets pioneers at work to level the roads. But it may be taken as a call to duty, and it is the famed duty that we are called to in preparation for Christ's entrance into our souls.

(1.) We must get into such a frame of spirit, as will dispose us to receive Christ and his gospel; *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*, i. e. Prepare yourselves for him, and let all that be suppressed which would be an obstruction to his entrance; make room for Christ; *Make straight a highway for him*. If he prepare the end for us we ought sure to prepare the way for him. Prepare for the saviour; *Lift up your heads, O ye gates*, *Psal. xxiv. 7, 8.* Prepare for the salvation, the great salvation, and other lesser deliverances. Let us get to be fit for them, and then God will work them out. Let us not stand in our own light, nor put a bar in our own door, but find or make a highway for him, even in that which was desert ground. This is that for which he waits to be gracious.

(2.) We must get our hearts levelled by divine grace. Those that were hindered from comfort in Christ by their dejections and despondencies are the valleys that must be exalted. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ by a proud conceit of their own merit and worth, are the mountains and hills that must be made low. Those that have entertained prejudices

prejudices against the word and ways of God, that are untractable and disposed to thwart and contradict even that which is plain and easy, because it agrees not with their corrupt inclinations and secular interests, are the crooked that must be made straight, and the rough places that must be made plain. Let but the gospel of Christ have a fair hearing, and it cannot fail of acceptance. Thus prepare the way of the Lord: and thus God will by his grace prepare his own way in all the vessels of mercy, whose heart he opens as he did Lydia's.

And when this is done *the glory of the Lord shall be revealed*, ver. 5. (1.) When the captives are prepared for deliverance, Cyrus shall proclaim it, and they shall have the benefit of it; and they only whose hearts the Lord stirred up with courage and resolution to break through the discouragements that lay in their way, and to make nothing of the hills and valleys, and all the rough places. (2.) When John Baptist hath for some time preached repentance, mortification, and reformation, and so made ready a people prepared for the Lord, *Luke i. 17.* then the Messiah himself shall be revealed in his glory working miracles, which John did not; and by his grace, which is his glory, binding up and healing with consolations those whom John had wounded with convictions. And this revelation and divine glory shall be *a light to lighten the Gentiles; all flesh shall see it together*, and not the Jews only; they shall see and admire it, see it and bid it welcome; as the return out of captivity was taken notice of by the neighbour nations, *Psal. cxxvi. 3.* And it shall be the accomplishment of the word of God, not one iota or tittle of which shall fall to the ground, *the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*, and therefore the hand of the Lord will effect it.

2. By confidence in the word of the Lord, and not in any creature: *the mouth of the Lord having spoken it*, the voice hath this farther to cry, he that hath ears to hear let him hear it, *The word of our God shall stand for ever*, ver. 8. *i. e.* (1.) By this accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of salvation, and the performance of them to the utmost in due time, it appears that the word of the Lord is sure and what may be safely relied on; and then we are prepared for deliverance, when we depend entirely upon the word of God, build our hopes on that with an assurance that it will not make us ashamed; and in a dependence upon this word we must be brought to own that all flesh is grass, withering and fading. 1. The power of man when it doth appear against the deliverance is not to be feared; for it shall be as grass before the word of the Lord, it shall wither and be trodden down: the insulting Babylonians who promise themselves that the desolation of Jerusalem shall be perpetual, are but as grass which the Spirit of the Lord blows upon, makes nothing of, but blasts all its glory; for the word of the Lord, which promises their deliverance, shall stand for ever, and it is not in the power of their enemies to hinder the execution of it. 2. The power of man when it would appear for the deliverance, yet is not to be trusted to, for it is but as grass in comparison with the word of the Lord, which is the only firm foundation for us to build our hope upon. When God is about to work salvation for his people, he will take them off from depending upon creatures, and looking for it from hills and mountains, they shall fail them, and their expectations from them shall be frustrated, *the Spirit of the Lord shall blow upon them*; for God will have no creature to be a rival with him for the hope and confidence of his people; and as it is his word only that shall stand for ever, so in that word only our faith must stand. When we are brought to this, then, and not till then we are fit for mercy.

(2.) The word of our God, the glory of the Lord which is now to be revealed, the gospel, and that grace, which is brought with it to us, and wrought by it in us, shall stand for ever; and this is the satisfaction of all believers, when they find all their creature comforts, withering and fading like grass. Thus the apostle applies it to *the word, which by the gospel is preached unto us, and which lives and abides for ever as the incorruptible seed by which we are born again*, 1 Pet. i. 23, 24, 25. To prepare the way of the Lord we must be convinced, (1.) Of the vanity of the creature; that all flesh is grass, weak and withered, we ourselves are so, and therefore cannot save ourselves, all our friends are so, and therefore are unable to save us. All the beauty of the creature which might render it amiable, is but as the flower of grass, soon blasted, and therefore cannot recommend us to God and to his acceptance. We are dying creatures, all our comforts in this world are dying comforts, and therefore cannot be the felicity of our immortal souls; we must look farther for a salvation, look farther for a portion. (2.) Of the validity of the promise of God; we must be convinced that the word of the Lord can do that for us, which all flesh cannot; that forasmuch as it stands for ever, it will furnish us with a happiness that will run parallel with the duration of our soul that must live for ever; for the things that are not seen, but must be believed, are eternal.

9. ¶ O Zion, that bringeth good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! 10. Behold the LORD God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold his reward is with him, and his work before him. 11. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

It was promised, ver. 5. *That the glory of the Lord shall be revealed*, that is it with the hopes of which God's people must be comforted. Now here we are told,

1. How it shall be revealed, ver. 9. (1.) It shall be revealed to Zion and Jerusalem; notice shall be given of it to the remnant that are left in Zion and Jerusalem, the poor of the land that were wine-dressers and husbandmen, it shall be told them that their brethren shall return to them; and to the captives that belonged to Zion and Jerusalem, and retained their affection for them; Zion is said to dwell with the daughter of Babylon, *Zech. ii. 7.* And there she receives notice of Cyrus's gracious proclamation; and so the margin reads it, *O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, &c.* meaning the persons who were employed in publishing that proclamation; let them do it with a good will, let them make the country ring of it, and let them tell it to the sons of Zion in their own language, *saying to them, Behold your God.* (2.) It shall be published by Zion and Jerusalem, so the text reads it; they that remain there, or that were already returned, when they find the deliverance proceeding towards perfection, let them proclaim it in the most public places, from whence they may be best heard by all the cities of Judah; let them proclaim it as loud as they can, let them lift up their voice with strength, and not be afraid of overstraining themselves; let them not be afraid lest the enemy should hear it and quarrel with them; or lest it should not prove true, or not such good tidings as at first appeared; let them say to the cities of Judah and all the inhabitants of the country,

Behold your God. When God is going on with the salvation of his people, let them industriously spread the news among their friends, let them tell them it is God that has done it; whoever were the instruments God was the author; it is their God, a God in covenant with them, and he doth it as theirs, and they will reap the benefit and comfort of it. Behold him, take notice of his hand in it; and look above second causes; behold the God you have long looked for is come at last, chap. xxv. 9. *This is our God we have waited for him.* This may refer to the invitation which was sent forth from Jerusalem to the cities of Judah, as soon as they had set up an altar immediately upon their return out of captivity, to come and join with them in their sacrifices, *Ezra iii. 2, 3, 4.* When the worship of God is set up again, send notice of it to all your brethren that they may share with you in the comfort of it. But this was to have its full accomplishment in the apostles' public and undaunted preaching of the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The voice crying in the wilderness gave notice that he was coming, but now notice is given that he is come. Behold the Lamb of God; take a full view of your Redeemer. Behold your King, behold your God.

2. What that glory is which shall be revealed. Your God will come, will shew himself.

1. With the power and greatness of a prince, ver. 10. *He will come with a strong hand*, too strong to be obstructed, though it may be opposed. His strong hand shall subdue his people to himself, and shall restrain and conquer his and their enemies: He will come who is strong enough to break through all the difficulties that lay in his way. Our Lord Jesus was full of power, a mighty Saviour. Some read it, *he will come against the mighty one*, and overpower him, overcome him. Satan is the strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger than he: And he will make it to appear that he is, so, for, (1.) He shall reign in defiance of all opposition; his arm shall rule, shall over-rule for him, for the fulfilling of his counsels, to his own glory; for he is his own end. (3.) He shall recompence to all according to their work as a righteous judge; his reward is with him; he brings along with him, as a returning prince, punishments for the rebels, and preferments for his loyal subjects. 3. He shall proceed and accomplish his purposes; his work is before him, *i. e.* He knows perfectly well what he has to do, which way to go about it, and how to compass it: *He himself knows what he will do.*

2. With the purity and tenderness of a shepherd, ver. 11. God is the *shepherd of Israel*, *Psal. lxxx. 1.* Christ the good shepherd, *John x. 11.* The same that rules with the strong hand of a prince, leads and feeds with the kind hand of a shepherd. (1.) He takes care of all his flock, the little flock; he shall feed his flock like a shepherd. His word is food for his flock to feed on, his ordinances fields for them to feed in; his ministers are under shepherds that are appointed to attend them. (2.) He takes particular care of those that most need his care, the lambs that are weak, and cannot help themselves, and are accustomed to hardship: and *those that are with young*, that are therefore heavy, and if any harm be done them are in danger of casting their young: he particularly takes care for a succession, that it may not fail or be cut off. The good shepherd has a tender care for children that are towards and hopeful; for young converts that are setting out in the way to heaven; for weak believers, and those that are of a sorrowful spirit: These are the lambs of his flock, that shall be sure to want nothing that their case requires. (1.) He will gather them in the arms of his power; his strength shall be made perfect in their weakness, 2 Cor. xii. 9. He will gather them in when they wander, gather them up when they fall, gather them together when they are dispersed, and gather them home to himself at last; and all this with his own arm, out of which none shall be able to pluck them, *John x. 28.* (2.) He will carry them in the bosom of his love, and cherish them there. When they tire, or are weary, are sick and faint, when they meet with foul ways he will carry them on, and take care they be not left behind. (3.) He will gently lead them. By his word, he requires no more service, and by his providence he inflicts no more trouble than he will enable them for; for he considers their frame.

12. ¶ Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? 13. Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? 14. With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? 15. Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. 16. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. 17. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

The scope of these verses is to shew what a great and glorious Being the Lord Jehovah is, who is Israel's God and Saviour. It comes in here, (1.) To encourage his people that were captives in Babylon to hope in him, and to depend upon him for deliverance, though they were never so weak, and their oppressors never so strong. (2.) To engage them to cleave to him, and not to turn aside after other Gods; for there are none to be compared with him, (3.) To possess all those who receive the glad tidings of redemption by Christ, with a holy awe and reverence of God. Though it was said ver. 9. *Behold your God*, and ver. 11. *that he shall feed his flock like a shepherd*; yet these condescensions of his grace must not be thought of with any diminutions to the transcendences of his glory. Let us see how great our God is, fear before him, for,

1. His power is unlimited, and what no creature can compare with, much less contend with, ver. 12. (1.) He hath a vast reach, view the celestial globe, and you are astonished at the extent of it; but the great God *metes the heavens with a span*, to him they are but a hand-breadth, so large handed is he. View the terraqueous globe, and he has the command of that too; all the waters in the world he can measure in the hollow of his hand, where we can hold but a little water: and the dry land he easily manageth, for he comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure; or with his three fingers, it is no more to him than a pugil, or that which we take up between our thumb and two fingers. (2.) He hath a vast strength, and can as easily move mountains and hills, as the tradesman heaves his goods into the scales, and out of them again; and poise them with his hand as exactly as if he weighed them in a pair of balances. This may refer to the work of creation, when the heavens were stretched out exactly as that which is spanned and

and the earth and waters put together in just proportions, as if they had been measured; and the mountains made of such a weight as to serve for ballast to the globe, and no more: Or to the work of providence (which is a continued creation) and the consistency of all the creatures with each other.

2. His wisdom is unsearchable, and what no creature can give either information or direction to, *ver. 13, 14*. As none can do what God has done and doth, so none can assist him in the doing of it, or suggest any thing to him which he thought not of. When the Lord by his Spirit made the world, *Job xxvi. 13*, there was none that directed his Spirit, or gave him any advice, either what to do, or how to do it: Nor doth he need any counsellor to direct him in the government of the world, nor is there any with whom he consults, as kings, the wisest of them, do with them that *know laws and judgment*, *Ester i. 13*. God needs not to be told what is done, for he knows it perfectly: nor needs he be advised concerning what is to be done, for he knows both the right end and proper means. This is much insisted upon here, because the poor captives had no politicians among them to manage their concerns at court, or to put them in a way of gaining their liberty; no matter, saith the prophet, you have a God to act for you, that needs not the assistance of statesmen. In the great work of our redemption by Christ, matters were concerted *before the world*, when there were none to *teach God in the path of judgment*, *1 Cor. ii. 7*.

3. The nations of the world are nothing in comparison of him, *ver. 15—17*. Take them altogether, all the great and mighty nations of the earth, kings the most pompous, kingdoms the most populous, both the most wealthy; take the isles, the multitude of them, the isles of the Gentiles, and before him, when they stand in competition with him, or in opposition to him, they are as a drop of the bucket compared with the vast ocean, or the small dust of the balance, which doth not serve to turn it, and therefore is not regarded, it is so small in comparison with all the dust of the earth. He takes them up, and throws them away from him, as a very little thing, not worth speaking of: They are all in his eye as nothing, as if they had no being at all: for they add nothing to his perfection and all-sufficiency; they are counted by him, and are to be counted by us, in comparison of him less than nothing, and vanity; when he pleaseth he can as easily bring them all into nothing, as at first he brought them out of nothing. When God has work to do, he values not either the assistance or the resistance of any creature. They are all vanity, the word that is used for the chaos, *Gen. i. 2*, to which they will at last be reduced. Let this beget in us high thoughts of God, and low thoughts of this world, and engage us to make God, and not man, both our fear and our hope. This magnifies God's love to the world, that though it is of such small account and value with him, yet for the redemption of it he gave his *only begotten Son*, *John iii. 16*.

4. The services of the church can make no addition to him, nor do they bear any proportion to his infinite perfections, *ver. 16*. *Lebanon is not sufficient to burn*: Not the wood of it, to be for the fuel: the altar though it be so well stocked with cedars: not the bras of it, to be for sacrifices though it be so well stocked with cattle, *ver. 16*. Whatever we honour God with, it falls infinitely short of the merits of his perfection; for he is exalted *far above all blessing and praise*, all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

18. ¶ To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? 19. The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. 20. He that is so impoverished, that he hath no oblation, chooseth a tree, that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image that shall not be moved. 21. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: 23. That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. 24. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. 25. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy one. 26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by name by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

The prophet here reproves those, (1.) That represented God by creatures, and so changed his truth into a lie, and his glory into shame; that made images, and then said they resembled God, and paid their homage to them accordingly. (2.) That put creatures in the place of God, that feared them more than God, as if they were a match for him, or loved them more than God, as if they were fit to be rivals with him. Twice the challenge is here made, *To whom will ye liken God?* *ver. 18*. and again, *ver. 25*. the Holy One himself saith, *To whom will ye liken me?* This shews the folly and absurdity, (1.) Of corporal idolatry, making visible images of him who is invisible, imagining the image to be animated by the Deity, and the Deity to be represented by the image; which as it was an instance of the corruption of the human nature, so it was an intolerable injury to the honour of the divine nature. (2.) Of spiritual idolatry, making creatures equal with God in our affections. Proud people make themselves equal with God: covetous people make their money equal with God; and whatever we esteem or love, fear or hope in more than God, that creature we equal with God, which is the highest affront imaginable to him who is *God over all*.

Now to shew the absurdity of this;

1. The prophet describes idols as despicable things, and worthy of the greatest contempt, *ver. 19, 20*. Look upon the better sort of them, which rich people set up and worship; they are made of some base metal cast into what shape the founder pleaseth, and that is gilded or overlaid with plates of gold, that it may pass for a golden image. It is a creature; for the workman made it, *therefore it is not God*, *Hos. viii. 6*. it depended upon his will whether it should be a god at all, and of what shape it should be. It

is a cheat; for it is gold on the outside, but within it is lead or copper; in this indeed representing the deities, that they were not what they seemed to be, and deceived their admirers. How despicable then are the worst sort of them: the poor men's gods. He that is so impoverished that he hath scarce a sacrifice to offer to his god when he has made him; yet will not be without an enslaved deity of his own. And though he cannot procure one of brass or stone, he will have a wooden one, rather than none, and for that purpose chooseth a tree that will not rot presently, and of that he will have his graven image made; both agree to have their image well fastened, that they may not be robbed of it. The better sort have silver chains to fix their's with; and though it be but a wooden image, care is taken that it shall not be moved. Let us pause a little and see, (1.) How these idolaters shame themselves, and what a reproach they put upon their own reason in dreaming that gods of their own making, Nehushtans, pieces of brass or logs of wood, should be able to do them any kindness. Thus vain were they in their imaginations, and how was their foolish heart darkened! (2.) See how these idolaters shame us, who worship the only living and true God; they spared no costs upon their idols, we grudge that as waste which is spent in the service of our God: they took care they should not be moved, we wilfully provoke our God to depart from us.

2. He describes God as infinitely great, and worthy of the highest veneration; so that between him and idols, whatever competition there may be, there is no comparison. To prove the greatness of God, he appeals,

1. To what they had heard of him by the hearing of the ear; and the consent of all ages and nations concerning him, *ver. 20*. Have ye not known by the very light of nature; hath it not been told you by your fathers and teachers, according to the constant tradition received from their ancestors and predecessors, even from the beginning? those notices of God are as ancient as the world; have ye not understood it as always acknowledged from the foundation of the earth, that God is a great God, and a great King above all gods? It has been a truth universally admitted, that there is an infinite Being that is the fountain of all being. This is understood not only ever since the beginning of the world, but from and by the origin of the universe: it is founded upon the foundation of the earth; the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, *Rom. i. 20*. Thou mayest not only ask thy father and he shall tell thee this, and thine elders, *Deut. xxxii. 7*, but ask them that go by the way, *Job vii. 9*, ask the first man you meet, and he will say the same. Some read it, *will ye not know? will ye not hear?* for those that are ignorant of this are willingly ignorant; the light shines in their faces, but they shut their eyes against it.

Now that which is here said of God, is,

1. That he has the command of all the creatures; the heaven and the earth themselves are under his management; he sits upon the circle or globe of the earth, *ver. 22*. He that has the special residence of his glory in the upper world, yet maintains a dominion over this lower world, gives law to it, and directs all the motions of it to his own glory: he sits undisturbed upon the earth and establisheth it: He is still stretching out the heavens, his power and providence keeps them still stretched out, and will do so till the day comes that they shall be rolled together like a scroll. He spreads them out as easily as we draw a curtain to and fro, opening these curtains in the morning, and drawing them close again at night. And the heaven is to this earth; as a tent to dwell in; it is a canopy drawn over our heads, *Et quod tegit omnia calum*. *Ovid. Psalm civ. 2*.

2. That the children of men, even the greatest and mightiest, are as nothing before him. The numerous inhabitants of this earth are in his eye as grasshoppers in ours; so little and inconsiderable, of such small value, and of such little use, and so easily crushed. Proud men's lifting up themselves, is but like the grasshopper's leap, in an instant they must down to the earth again. If the scies thought themselves grasshoppers before the face of Anak, *Numb. xiii. 31*, what are we before the great God? Grasshoppers live but a while, and live carelessly, not like the ant; so do the most of men.

3. That those that appear and act against him, how formidable soever they may be to their fellow-creatures, will certainly be humbled and brought down by the mighty hand of God, *ver. 23, 24*. Princes and judges, that have great authority, and abuse it to the support of oppression and injustice, they making nothing of those about them, *as for all their enemies, they puff at them*, *Psal. x. 5—xii. 5*. But when the great God takes them to task, he brings them to nothing: he humbles them, and tames them, and makes them as vanity: little regarded, neither feared nor loved: He makes them utterly unable to stand before his judgments; which shall either, (1.) Prevent their settlement in their authority. *they shall not be planted; they shall not be sown*; and those are the two ways of propagating plants, either by seed or slips: Nay, if they should gain a little breed, and so be planted or sown, yet *their stock shall not take root in the earth*, they shall not continue long in power. Eliphaz saw the foolish taking root, but suddenly cursed their habitation: and then how soon is the figure withered away! Or, (2.) He will blast them when they think they are settled; he doth but blow upon them, and then they shall wither, and come to nothing, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble: For God's wrath, though it seems at first to blow slightly upon them, yet will soon become a mighty whirlwind; when God judgeth he will overcome. Those that will not bow before him, cannot stand before him.

2. He appeals to what their eyes saw of him, *ver. 26*. Lift up your eyes on high; be not always poring on this earth, (*O curvæ in terras animæ & caelestium inanes!*) but sometimes look up, (*Os hominis sublimis delevit calumque tueri iussit;*) behold the glorious light of heaven, consider who has created them: They neither made nor marshalled themselves, doubtless therefore there is a god that gave them their being power, and motion: What we see of the creature, should lead us to the Creator. The idolaters when they lifted up their eyes and beheld the hosts of heaven, being wholly immersed in sense, look no farther, but worshipped them, *Deut. iv. 19*. *Job xxxi. 26*. Therefore the prophet here directs us to make use of our reason as well as our senses, and to consider who created them, and to pay our homage to him. Give him the glory of his sovereignty over them: he brings out their host by number, as a general draws out the squadrons and battalions of his army; of the knowledge he hath of them, he calls them all by names, proper names, according as their place and influence are, *Psal. cxlvii. 4*. And of the use he makes of them: when he calls them out to any service, so obsequious are they that by the greatness of his might not one of them fails; but as when the stars in their courses fought against Siferu every one doth that to which he is appointed. To make these creatures therefore rivals with God, which are such ready servants to him, is an injury to them, as well as an affront to him.

27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? 28. ¶ Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth

not, neither is weary? *there is no searching of his understanding.* 29. He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have no might, he increaseth strength.* 30. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31. But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their strength*; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Here, 1. The prophet reproves the people of God, who are now supposed to be captives in Babylon for their unbelief and distrust of God, and the dejections and despondencies of their spirit under their afflictions; *ver. 27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, to thyself, and to those about thee, my way is hid from the Lord? Why dost thou make hard and melancholy conclusions concerning thyself and thy present case, as if it were desperate? (1.) The titles he here gives them were enough to shame them out of their distrusts: O Jacob, O Israel! Let them remember whence they took their names, from one who had found God faithful to him, and kind in all his straits; and why they bore these names, as God's professing people in covenant with him. (2.) The way of reproving them is by reasoning with them. Why! consider whether thou hast any ground to say so. Many of our foolish frets, and foolish fears, would vanish before a strict enquiry into the causes of them. (3.) That which they are reproved for, is an ill-natured, ill-favoured word they spoke of God, as if he had cast them off. There seems to be an emphasis laid upon their saying it: Why sayest thou, and speakest thou? It is bad to have evil thoughts arising in our mind, but it is worse to put an imprimatur to them, and turn them into evil words. David reflects with regret upon what he said in his haste, when he was in distress. (4.) The ill-word they said, was a word of despair concerning their present calamitous condition. They were ready to conclude, (1.) That God would not heed them; - *my way is hid from the Lord*: i. e. he takes no notice of our straits, nor concerns himself any more in our concerns: There are such difficulties in our case, that even divine wisdom and power, will be nonplussed: A man whose way is hid, is one whom God hath edged in. Job iii. 23. (2.) That God could not help them; *my judgment is passed over from my God*; i. e. my case is past relief, so far past it that God himself cannot redress the grievances of it: *Our bones are dried, Ezek. xxvii. 11.**

2. He reminds them of that, which if duly considered, was sufficient to silence all those fears and distrusts; for their conviction, as before for the conviction of idolaters, *ver. 21.* he appeals to what they had known and what they had heard. Jacob and Israel were a knowing people, or might have been, and their knowledge came by hearing, for wisdom cried in their chief places of concourse. Now, among other things they had heard, that *God had spoken once, twice, yea many a time they had heard it, That power belongs unto God, Psal. lxxii. 11.* That is,

He is himself an almighty God. He must needs be so, for he is the everlasting God, even Jehovah: He was from eternity, he will be to eternity; and therefore with him there is no deficiency, no decay. He hath his being of himself, and therefore all his perfections must needs be boundless: He is without beginning of days or end of life, and therefore with him there is no change. He is also the creator of the ends of the earth, i. e. of the whole earth, and all that is in it from end to end: He therefore is the rightful owner and ruler of all, and must be concluded to have an absolute power over all, and an all-sufficiency to help his people in their greatest straits. Doubtless he is still as able to save his church, as he was at first to make the world: (1.) He hath wisdom to contrive the salvation, and that wisdom is never at a loss; *there is no searching out of his understanding*, so as to countermin the counsels of it and defeat its intentions; no, nor so as to determine what he will do, for he hath ways by himself, ways in the sea: none can say, Thus far God's wisdom can go and no farther; for when we know not what to do, he knows. (2.) He hath power to bring about the salvation, and that power is never exhausted. He *fainteth not, neither is weary*; he upholds the whole creation, and governs all the creatures, and is neither tired nor soiled; and therefore no doubt he has power to relieve his church, when it is brought never so low, without weakness and weariness.

2. He giveth strength and power to his people, and helps them by enabling them to help themselves: He that is the strong God is the strength of Israel.

1. He can help the weak, *ver. 29.* Many a time he giveth power to the faint; to them that are ready to faint away, and to them that have no might; he not only giveth but increaseth strength, as there is more and more occasion for it. Many out of bodily weakness are wonderfully recovered and made strong by the providence of God: and many that are feeble in spirit, timorous and faint-hearted, unable for services and sufferings, yet are strengthened by the grace of God *with all might in the inward man.* To them who are sensible of their weakness, and ready to acknowledge they have no might, God doth in a special manner increase strength; for *when we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong in the Lord.*

2. He will help the willing: will help those that in an humble dependence upon him help themselves, and do well for those that do their best, *ver. 30, 31.* Those that trust to their own sufficiency, and are so confident of that, that they neither exert themselves to the utmost, nor seek unto God for his grace, are the youth and the young men, who are strong, but are apt to think themselves stronger than they are. And they shall faint and be weary, yea, they shall utterly fail in their services, in their conflicts, and under their burdens; they shall soon be made to see the folly of trusting to themselves. But they that wait on the Lord, that make conscience of their duty to him, and by faith rely upon him, and commit themselves to his conduct; they that do so, God will not fail them. (1.) They shall have grace sufficient for them: they shall renew their strength as their work is renewed, as there is new occasion: they shall be anointed, and their lamps supplied with fresh oil: God will be their arm every morning, *Isa. xxxiii. 2.* If at any time they have been soiled and weakened, they shall recover themselves and so renew their strength. *Heb. They shall change their strength*, as their work is changed; doing work, suffering work; they shall have strength to labour, strength to wrestle, strength to resist, strength to bear. As the day, so shall the strength be. (2.) They shall use this grace for the best purposes. Being strengthened, (1.) They shall soar upwards, upwards towards God: *they shall mount up with wings like eagles* so strongly, so swiftly, so high and heavenwards. In the strength of divine grace their souls shall ascend above the world, and even enter into the holiest. Pious and devout affections, are the eagles' wing, on which gracious souls mount up, *Psal. xlv. 1.* (2.) They shall press forwards, forwards towards heaven: they shall walk, they shall run the way of God's commandments, cheerfully and with alacrity, *they shall not be weary*; constantly and with perseverance, *they shall not faint*; and therefore in due season they shall reap. Let Jacob and Israel, therefore, in their greatest

distresses continue waiting upon God, and not despair of relief and succour from him timely and effectual.

C H A P. XLI.

This chapter, as the former, is intended both for the conviction of idolaters, and for the consolation of all God's faithful worshippers; for the Spirit is sent and ministers employed by him, both to convince and to comfort. And however this might be primarily intended for the conviction of Babylonians and the comfort of Israelites, or for the conviction of those in Israel that were addicted to idolatry, as multitudes were, and the comfort of those that kept their integrity; doubtless it was intended both for admonition and encouragement to us; admonition to keep ourselves from idols, and encouragement to trust in God. Here, (1.) God by the prophet shews the folly of those that worshipped idols, especially that thought their idols able to contest with him and controul him, *ver. 1--9.* (2.) He encourageth his faithful ones to trust in him, with an assurance that he would take their part against their enemies, make them victorious over them, and bring about a happy change of their affairs, *ver. 10--20.* (3.) He challengeth the idols, that were rivals with him for men's adoration, to vie with him either for knowledge or power; either to shew things to come, or to do good or evil, *ver. 21--29.* So that the chapter may be summed up in those words of Elijah, If Jehovah be God, then follow him; but if Baal be God, then follow him: and in the people's acknowledgment upon the issue of the trial, Jehovah he is the God; Jehovah he is the God.

1. **K** E E P silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment. 2. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust of his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. 3. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. 4. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD the first, and with the last: I am he. 5. The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. 6. They helped every one his neighbour, and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. 7. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheneth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. 8. But thou Israel art my servant Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. 9. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

That particular instance of God's care for his people Israel in raising up Cyrus to be their deliverer, is here insisted upon as a great proof both of his sovereignty above all idols, and of his power to protect his people.

Here is, 1. A general challenge to the worshippers and admirers of idols, to make good their pretensions, in competition with God and opposition to him, *ver. 1.* It is renewed, *ver. 21. Produce your cause.* The court is set, summonses are sent to the islands that lay most remote, but not out of God's jurisdiction, for he is the creator and possessor of the ends of the earth, to make their appearance and give their attendance. Silence (as usual) is proclaimed while the cause is in trying: keep silence before me, and judge nothing before their time; while the cause is in trying between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, it becomes all people silently to expect the issue; not to object against God's proceedings, but to be confident that he will carry the day. The defendants of idolatry are called to say what they can in defence of it; *Let them renew their strength* in opposition to God, and see whether it be equal to the strength which they renew that wait upon him, *chap. xl. 31.* let them try their utmost efforts, whether by force of arms or force of arguments: *Let them come near*, they shall not complain that God's dread makes them afraid, *Job xiii. 21.* so that they cannot say what they have to say in vindication and honour of their idols; no, *let them speak freely, let us come near together to judgment.* Note, 1. The cause of God and his kingdom is not afraid of a fair trial; if the cause be but fairly stated, it will be surely carried in favour of religion. 2. The enemies of God's church, and his holy religion may safely be challenged to say and do their worst for the support of their unrighteous cause: He that sits in heaven laughs at them, and the daughters of Zion despised them, for great is the truth and will prevail.

2. He particularly challengeth the idols to do that for their worshippers and against his, which he had done and would do for his worshippers and against theirs. Different senses are given of *ver. 2.* concerning the righteous man raised from the east; and since we cannot determine which is the true, we will make use of each as good. That which is to be proved is, (1.) That the Lord is God alone, the first, and with the last, *ver. 4.* that he is infinite, eternal and unchangeable; that he governed the world from the beginning, and will to the end of time. He has reigned of old, and will reign for ever; the counsels of his kingdoms were from eternity, and the continuance of it will be to eternity. (2.) That Israel is his servant, *ver. 8.* whom he owns, and protects, and employs, and in whom he is, and will be glorified. As there is a God in heaven, so there is a church on earth that is his particular care. Elijah prays, *1 Kings xviii. 36. Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant.* Now to prove this he shews,

(1.) That it was he who called Abraham the father of his despised nation out of an idolatrous country, and by many instances of his favour made his name great, *Gen. xii. 2.* He is the righteous man whom God raised up from the east. Of him the Chaldee paraphrase expressly understands it, who brought Abraham publicly from the east! to maintain the honour of the people of Israel, it was very proper to shew what a figure this great ancestor of theirs made in his day; and *ver. 8.* seems to be the explication of it, where God calls Israel the seed of Abraham my friend; and *ver. 4.* he calls the generations, namely, the generations of Israel from the beginning. Also to put contempt upon idolatry, and particularly upon the Chaldean idolatry,

it was proper to shew how Abraham was called from serving other gods, *Josh. xxiv. 2, 3. &c.* So what an early testimony was borne against that idolatry which boasted so much of its antiquity: Also to encourage the captives in Babylon to hope that God would find a way for their return to their own land, it was proper to mind them how at first he brought their father Abraham out of the same country into this land, to give it him for an inheritance, *Gen. xv. 7.*

Now observe what is here said concerning him; (1.) That he was a *righteous man*, or *righteousness*, a *man of righteousness*, that *believed God*, and it was counted to him for righteousness; and so he became the father of all those who by faith in Christ are made the *righteousness of God through him*, *Rom. iv. 3-11. 2 Cor. v. 21.* He was a great example of righteousness in his day, and taught his household to do judgment and justice, *Gen. xviii. 19.* (2.) That God raised him up from the east, from Ur first, and afterwards from Haran, which lay east from Canaan. God would not let him settle in either of those places; but did by him as the eagle by her young, when she stirs up her nest: he raised him out of iniquity, and made him pious; out of obscurity, and made him famous. (3.) He called him to his foot, to follow him with an implicit faith; for he went out, not knowing whither he went, but whom he followed, *Heb. xi. 8.* Those whom God effectually calls, he calls to his foot; to be subject to him, to attend him, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes: and we must all either come to his foot or be made his footstool. (4.) He gave nations before him, the nations of Canaan, which he promised to make him master of: and thus far gave him an interest in, that the Hittites acknowledged him a mighty prince among them, *Gen. xxiii. 6.* he made him rule over those kings whom he conquered for the rescue of his brother Lot, *Gen. xiv.* And when God gave them as dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow, *i. e.* made them an easy prey to his catechised servants, he then pursued and passed safely or in peace under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedec himself appeared to celebrate it. Now who did this but the great Jehovah? can any of the gods of the heathen do so?

(2.) That it is he who will ere long raise up Cyrus from the east. It is spoken of according to the language of prophecy as a thing past, because as sure to be done in due season as if it were already done: God will raise him up in righteousness, so it may be read, *chap. xlv. 13.* will call him to his foot; make what use of him he pleaseth, make him victorious over the nations that oppose his coming to the crown, and give him success in all his wars: and he shall be a type of Christ, who is righteousness itself, the Lord our righteousness, whom God will in the fulness of time raise up and make victorious over the powers of darkness: so that he shall spoil them and make a shew of them openly.

3. He exposeth the folly of idolaters, who notwithstanding the convincing proofs which the God of Israel had given of his being God alone, yet obstinately persisted in their idolatry, nay, were so much the more hardened in it, *ver. 5.* The *Isles of the Gentiles* saw this; not only what God did for Abraham himself, but what he did for his seed for his sake; how he brought them out of Egypt, and made them rule over kings, and they feared, *Ex. d. xv. 14, 15, 16.* They were afraid, and according to the sayings, *ver. 1.* they drew near and came; they could not avoid taking notice of what God did for Abraham and his seed: but instead of helping to reason one another out of their foolish idolatries, they helped to confirm one another in them, *ver. 6, 7.* (1.) They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon their religion, which they were jealous for the honour of, and were resolved right or wrong to adhere to, and therefore were alarmed to appear vigorously for the support of it, as the Ephesians for their Diana. When God by his wonderful appearances on the behalf of his people went about to wrest their idols from them, they held them so much the faster, and said one to another, *Be of good courage*, let us unanimously agree to keep up the reputation of our gods; though Dagon fell before the ark, he shall be set up again in his place; one tradesman encourageth another to come into a confederacy for the keeping up of the noble craft of god-making. Thus oftentimes men's convictions exasperate their corruptions, and they are made worse both by the word and works of God, that should make them better. (2.) They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon themselves; they thought themselves in danger from the growing greatness both of Abraham that was a convert from idolatry, and of the people of Israel that were separatists from it; and therefore they not only had recourse to their old god for protection, but made new ones, *Deut. xxxii. 17.* So the carpenter having done his part to the timber-work, encourageth the goldsmith to do his part in gilding or overlaying it; and when it came into the goldsmith's hand, he that smoothes with the hammer, that polisheth it or beats it thin, quickened him that smote the anvil; bid him be expeditious, and told him it was ready for the soldering; which perhaps was the last operation about it, and then it is fastened with nails, and you have a god of it presently. Do sinners thus hearten and quicken one another in the way of sin? And shall not the servants of the living God both stir up one another to, and strengthen one another in his service? Some read all this ironically, and by way of permission; *Let them help every one his neighbour, let the carpenter encourage the goldsmith*; but all in vain, idols shall fall for all this.

4. He encourageth his own people to trust in him, *ver. 8, 9.* But thou, Israel, art my servant; They know me not, but thou knowest me, and knowest better things than to join with such ignorant besotted people as these; for it is intended for a warning to the people of God not to walk in the way of the heathen. They put themselves under the protection of these impotent deities, but thou art under my protection: they that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusteth in them; but thou, O Israel, art the servant of a better master. Observe what is suggested here for the encouragement of God's people, when they are threatened and insulted over. (1.) They are God's servants, and he will not see them abused, especially for what they do in his service; *Thou art my servant*, *ver. 8.* and *ver. 9.* I have said unto thee, *Thou art my servant*; and I will not go back from my word. (2.) He hath chosen them to be a peculiar people to himself; they were not forced upon him, but of his own good will he set them apart. (3.) They were the seed of Abraham his friend; it was the honour of Abraham that he was called the friend of God, *James ii. 23.* whom God covenanted and conversed with as a friend, and the man of his counsel; and this honour have all the saints, *John xv. 15.* And for the father's sake the people of Israel were beloved. God was pleased to look upon them as the posterity of an old friend of his, and therefore to be kind to them; for the covenant of friendship was made with Abraham and his seed. (4.) He had sometimes, when they had been scattered among the heathen fetched them from the ends of the earth, and taken them out of the hands of the chief ones thereof, and therefore he would not now abandon them. Abraham their father was fetched from a place at a great distance, and they in his loins, and those who had been thus far fetched and dear bought, he could not easily part with. (5.) He had not yet cast them away, though they had often provoked him, and therefore he would not now abandon them. What God has done for his people, and what he has farther engaged to do, shall encourage them to trust in him at all times.

10. ¶ Fear thou not: for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. 11. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee, shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing, and they that strive with thee shall perish. 12. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. 13. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. 14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 15. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. 16. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel. 17. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. 18. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. 19. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the tittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together: 20. That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

The scope of these verses is to silence the fears and encourage the faith of the servants of God in their distresses: perhaps it is intended in the first place for the support of God's Israel, in captivity; but all that faithfully love God through patience and comfort of this scripture, may have hope. And it is addressed to Israel as a single person, that it might the more easily and readily be accommodated and applied by every Israelite, indeed to himself. That is a word both of caution, counsel, and comfort, which is so often repeated, *Fear thou not*; and again, *ver. 13. Fear not*, and *ver. 14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob*; fear not the threatenings of the enemy, doubt not the promises of thy God; fear not that thou shalt perish in thine affliction, or that the promises of thy deliverance shall fail: It is against the mind of God that his people should be a timorous people.

For the suppressing of fear, he assures them;

1. That they may depend upon his presence with them as their God, and a God all-sufficient for them in the worst of times. Observe with what a tenderness God speaks, and how willing he is to let the heirs of promise know the immutability of his counsel; and how desirous to lay them easy, *Fear thou not, for I am with thee*: not only within call, but present with thee; *Be not dismayed* at the power of those that are against thee, for *I am thy God*, and engaged for thee. Art thou weak? *I will strengthen thee*; Art thou destitute of friends? *I will help thee* in the time of need; Art thou ready to sink, ready to fall? *I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness*, that right hand which is full of righteousness in dispersing rewards and punishments, *Psal. xlviii. 10.* And again, *ver. 13.* it is promised, (1.) That God will strengthen their hands; *i. e.* will help them; *I will hold thy right hand*, go hand in hand with thee, to come; he will take us by the hand as our guide, to lead us in our way, will help us up when we are fallen, or prevent our falls; when we are weak he will hold us up, wavering he will fix us, trembling he will encourage us, and to hold us by the right hand, *Psal. lxxiii. 23.* (2.) That he will silence their fears, *saying unto thee, Fear not*: He has said it again and again in his word, and hath there provided sovereign antidotes against fear; but he will go farther, he will by his Spirit say it to their hearts, and make them to hear it, and so will help them.

2. That though their enemies be now very formidable, insolent, and severe, yet the day is coming when God will reckon with them, and they shall triumph over them. There are those that are incensed against God's people, and strive with them, *ver. 11.* and war against them, *ver. 12.* that hate them, and seek their ruin, and are continually picking quarrels with them: But let not God's people be incensed at them, nor strive with them, nor render evil for evil; but wait God's time, and believe, (1.) That they shall be convinced of the folly at least, if not of the sin, of striving with God's people; and finding it to no purpose, they shall be ashamed and confounded, which might bring them to repentance, but will rather fill them with rage. (2.) That they shall be quite ruined and undone, *ver. 11. They shall be as nothing* before the justice and power of God: When God comes to deal with his proud enemies, he makes nothing of them; or, they shall be brought to nothing, shall be as if they had never been. This is repeated, *ver. 12. they shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought*; or, as that which is gone, and has failed. They that were formidable, shall become despicable; that fancied they could do any thing, shall be able to bring nothing to pass: that made a figure in the world, and a mighty noise, shall become mere cyphers, and be buried in silence; they shall perish, not only be nothing, but be miserable. *Thou shalt seek them*; shalt enquire what is become of them that they do not appear as usual, but thou shalt not find them, as David, *Psal. xxxvii. 36. I sought him but he could not be found.*

3. That they themselves should become a terror to those who were now a terror to them; and victory should turn on their side, *ver. 14, 15, 16.* See here, (1.) How Jacob and Israel are reduced and brought very low: It is the worm Jacob; so little, and weak, and defenceless, despised and trampled on by every body, forced to creep even into the earth for safety; and we must not wonder that Jacob is become a worm, when even Jacob's King calls himself a worm and no man, *Psal. xxii. 6.* God's people are sometimes as worms in their humble thoughts of themselves and their enemies' haughty thoughts of them; worms but not vipers, as their enemies are, not of the serpent's seed. God regards Jacob's low estate, and saith, *Fear not, thou worm Jacob*; fear not that thou shalt be crushed; and ye men of Israel, ye few men, so some read it, ye dead men, so others, do not give up yourselves

yourselves for gone notwithstanding. Note, The grace of God will silence fears, even then when there seems to be the greatest cause for them: perplexed, but not in despair. (2.) How Jacob and Israel are advanced from this low estate, and made as formidable as ever they had been despicable. But *by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?* Where are here told, *I will help thee, saith the Lord*, and it is the honour of God to help the weak; he will help them, for he is their Redeemer, that hath used to redeem them, that has undertaken to do it; Christ is the Redeemer, from him is our help found: he will help them, for he is the *holy One of Israel*, worshipped among them in the beauty of holiness, and engaged by promise to them. The Lord will help them by enabling them to help themselves, and making Jacob to become a threshing instrument. Observe, He is but an instrument, a tool in God's hand that he is pleased to make use of; and he is an instrument of God's making, and is no more than God makes him. But if God makes him a threshing instrument, he will make use of him, and therefore will make him fit for use, new and sharp, and having teeth or sharp spikes; and then by divine direction and strength, thou shalt thresh the mountains, the highest and strongest, and most stubborn of thine enemies: thou shalt not only beat them, but beat them small: they shall not be as corn threshed out which is valuable and is carefully preserved, such God's people are when they are under the flail, *Ist. xxi. 10. O my threshing! but the corn of my floor*, that shall not be lost, but these are made as chaff, which is good for nothing, and which the husbandman is glad to get rid of. He pursues the metaphor, *ver. 16.* Having threshed them, thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall scatter them. This perhaps had its accomplishment in part in the victories of the Jews over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees; but it seems in general designed to read the final doom of all the implacable enemies of the church of God, and to have its accomplishment likewise in the triumphs of the cross of Christ, the gospel of Christ, and all the faithful followers of Christ, over the powers of darkness, which first or last shall all be dissipated, and in Christ all believers shall be more than conquerors, and *he that overcomes shall have power over the nations*, *Rev. ii. 26.*

4. That hereupon they shall have abundance of comfort in God, and God shall have abundance of honour from them; *Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, ver. 16.* When we are freed from that which hindered our joy and are blessed with that which is the matter of it, we ought to remember that God is our exceeding joy, and in him all our joys terminate. When we rejoice over our enemies, we must rejoice in the Lord, for to him alone we owe our liberties and victories. Thou shalt also *glory in the Holy One of Israel*, in thine interest in him, and relation to him, and what he has done for thee. And if thus we make God our praise and glory, we become to him for a praise and a glory.

5. That they shall have seasonable and suitable supplies for every thing that is proper for them in the time of need; and if there be occasion, God will again do for them as he did for Israel in their march from Egypt to Canaan, *ver. 17, 18, 19.* When the captives either in Babylon, or in their return thence, are in distress for want of water or shelter, God will take care of them, and one way or other make their journey, even through a wilderness, comfortable to them. But doubtless this promise hath more than such a private interpretation. Their return out of Babylon was typical of our redemption by Christ, and so the contents of these promises, (1.) Were provided by the gospel of Christ. That glorious discovery of his love has given full assurance to all those who hear the joyful sound, that God has provided inestimable comforts for them, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, the balancing of all their griefs, and the answering of all their prayers. (2.) They applied by the grace and Spirit of Christ to all believers, that they may have strong consolation in their way, and a complete happiness in their end. Our way to heaven lies through the wilderness of this world: Now,

1. It is here supposed that the people of God in their passage through this world, are often in straits; *The poor and needy seek water, and there is none; the poor in spirit hunger and thirst after righteousness:* The soul of man findeth itself empty and necessitous, seeks for satisfaction somewhere; but soon despairs of finding it in the world, that has nothing in it to make it easy: creatures are broken cisterns that can hold no water; so that *their tongue faileth for thirst*, they are weary of seeking that satisfaction in the world which is not to be had in it: their sorrow makes them thirsty, so doth their toil.

2. It is here promised, that one way or other all their grievances shall be redressed, and they shall be made easy.

1. God himself will be nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for: let all the praying people of God take notice of this, and take comfort of it; he hath said, *I the Lord will hear them*, will answer them, *I the God of Israel will not forsake them*; i. e. I will be with them, as I have always been, in their distress. While we are in the wilderness of this world, this promise is to us what the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel, an assurance of God's gracious presence.

2. They shall have a constant supply of fresh water, as Israel had in the wilderness, even there where one would least expect it, *ver. 18. I will open rivers in high places*; rivers of grace, rivers of pleasure, *rivers of living water*, which he spake of the Spirit, *Jehn vii. 38, 39.* that Spirit which should be poured out upon the Gentiles, who had been as high places, dry and barren, and lifted up in their own conceit above the necessity of that gift. And there shall be *fountains in the midst of the valleys*, the valleys of Baca, *Psal. lxxxiv. 6.* that are sandy and wearisome; or among the Jews that had been as fruitful valleys in comparison with the Gentile mountains. The preaching of the gospel to the world turned that wilderness into a pool of water; yielding fruit to the owner of it, and relief to the travellers through it.

3. They shall have a pleasant shade to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, as Israel when they pitched at Elim, where they had not only wells of water, but palm-trees, *Exod. xv. 27. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar*, *ver. 19.* I will turn the wilderness into an orchard or garden, such as used to be planted with these pleasant trees, so that they shall pass through the wilderness with as much ease and delight as a man walks in his grove. These trees shall be to them then what the pillar of cloud was to Israel in the wilderness, a shelter from the heat: Christ and his grace are so to believers as *the shadow of a great rock*, *chap. xxxii. 2.* When God sets up his church in the Gentile wilderness, there shall be as great a change made by it in men's characters, as if thorns and briars were turned into cedars, and fir-trees, and myrtles; and by this a blessed change is described, *chap. lv. 13.*

4. They shall see and acknowledge the hand of God, his power and his favour in this, *ver. 20.* God will do these strange and surprising things on purpose to awaken them to a conviction and consideration of his hand in all: that they may see this wonderful change; and knowing that it is above the ordinary course and power of nature, may consider that therefore it comes from a superior power; and comparing notes upon it, may understand together and concur in the acknowledgment of it, that the hand of the Lord, that mighty hand of his which is stretched out for his people and stretched out to them, hath done this, and the *Holy one of Israel hath created it*, made it anew, made it out of nothing, made it for the comfort of his people. Note, God doth great things for his people, that he may be taken notice of.

21. ¶ Produce your cause, saith the LORD, bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. 22. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. 23. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. 24. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you. 25. I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. 26. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words. 27. The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. 28. For I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word. 29. Behold, they are all vanity: their works are nothing, their molten images are wind and confusion.

The Lord by the prophet here repeats the challenge to idolaters, to make out the pretensions of their idols: *Produce your cause*, *ver. 21.* and make your best of it; *Bring forth the strongest reasons* you have, to prove that your idols are gods and worthy your adoration. Note. There needs no more to shew the absurdity of sin, than to produce the reasons that are given in defence of it, for they carry with them their own confutation.

1. The idols are here challenged to bring proofs of their knowledge and power; let us see what they can inform us of, and what they can do, understanding and active power are the accomplishments of a man; whoever pretends to be a god must have these in perfection. And have the idols made it to appear that they have so? No; (1.) They can tell us nothing that we did not know before, so ignorant are they. We challenge them to inform us, 1. What hath been formerly; let them shew the former things, and raise them out of the oblivion in which they were buried. God inspired Moses to write such a history of the creation, as the gods of the heathen could never have dictated to any of their enthusiasts: or let the defenders of idols tell us what mighty achievements they can boast of, as performed by their gods in former times. What did they ever do that was worth taking notice of? Let them instance in any thing, and it shall be considered, and its due weight given it: and it shall be compared with the latter end of it, and if in the issue it proved to be as great as it pretended to be, they shall have the credit of it. 2. We challenge them to tell us what shall happen, to declare to us things to come, *ver. 22.* and again, *ver. 23. shew the things that are to come hereafter.* Give this evidence of your omniscience, that nothing can be hid from you, and of your sovereignty and dominion; make it to appear that you have the doing of all, by letting us know beforehand what you design to do. Do this kindness to the world, let them know what is to come, that they may provide accordingly. Do this, and we will own that you are gods above us, and gods to us, and worthy of our adorations. No creature can foretell things to come, otherwise than by divine information with any certainty. (2.) They can do nothing that we cannot do ourselves, so impotent are they; he challengeth them to do either good or evil, good to their friends or evil to their enemies; let them do if they can any thing extraordinary, that people will admire and be affected with. Let them either bless or curse with power. Let us see them either inflict such plagues as God brought on Egypt, or bestow such blessings as God bestowed on Israel. Let them do some great thing, and we shall be amazed when we see it, and frightened into a veneration of them, as many have been into a veneration of the true God.

That which is charged upon these idols, and let them disprove it if they can, is, that they are of nothing, *ver. 24.* Their claims have no foundation at all, nor is there any ground or reason in the least for men's paying them the respect they do; there is nothing in them worthy our regard. They are less than nothing, worse than nothing, so some read it: *the work they do is of nought*, and so is the *ado* that is made about them; there is no pretence or colour for it; it is all a jest, it is all a sham put upon the world, and therefore he that chooseth you, and so gives you your deity, and (as some read it) that delighteth in you, is an abomination to God and all wise and good men. He that chooseth you chooseth an abomination, so some take it. A servant is at liberty to choose his master, but a man is not at liberty to choose his god. He that chooseth any other but the true God, chooseth an abomination; his choosing it makes it so.

2. God here produceth proofs that he is the true God, and none but he. Let him produce his strong reasons:

1. He hath an irresistible power. This he will shortly make to appear in the raising up of Cyrus, and making him a type of Christ, *ver. 25. He will raise him up from the north and from the rising of the sun.* Cyrus by his father was a Mede, by his mother a Persian; and his army consisted of Medes, whose country lay north, and Persians, whose country lay east from Babylon, God will raise him up to great power, and he shall come against Babylon, with ends of his own to serve: But, (1.) He shall proclaim God's name, so it may be read. He shall publish the honour of the God of Israel; so he did remarkably when in his proclamation for the release of the Jews out of their captivity he acknowledged, that the Lord God of Israel is the Lord God of heaven, and is the God: and he might be said to call on his name when he encouraged the building of his temple, and very probably did himself call upon him and pray to him, *Ezra i. 2, 3.* (2.) All opposition shall fall before him; he shall come upon the princes of Babylon and all others that stood in his way as mortar, and trample upon them, as the potter treads clay, to serve his own purposes with it. Christ as man was raised up from the north, for Nazareth lay in the northern parts of Canaan; as the angel of the covenant he ascends from the east. He maintained the honour of heaven; he shall call upon my name; and broke the powers of hell, came upon the prince of darkness as mortar and trod him down.

2. He hath an infallible foresight. He would not only do this, but he did now by his prophet foretell it. Now the false gods not only could not do it, but they could not foresee it. (1.) He challengeth them to produce any of their pretended deities or their diviners, that had given notice of this or could, *ver. 26.* Who has declared from the beginning any thing of this kind,

kind, or has told it before time? Tell us if there be any that we know of, for we know not any, if there be any, *we will say he is righteous*, he is true, his cause his just, his claims are proved, and he is in the right in demanding to be worshipped. This agrees with *ver. 22, 23.* (2.) He challengeth to himself the sole honour of doing it and foretelling it, *ver. 27. I am the first* (so it may be read) *that will say to Zion, Behold, behold them;* thus will let the people of Israel know their deliverers are at hand; for there were those who understood by books, God's books, the approach of the time, *Dan. ix. 2.* And I am he that *will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings*, these good tidings of their enlargement. This is applicable to the work of redemption, in which the Lord shewed himself much more than in the release of the Jews out of Babylon; he it was that contrived our salvation, and he brought it about, and he has given to us the glad tidings of reconciliation.

Lastly, Judgment is here given upon this trial:

1. None of all the idols had foretold or could foresee this work of wonder. Other nations besides the Jews were released out of captivity in Babylon by Cyrus, or at least were greatly concerned in the revolution of the monarchy and the transferring of it to the Persians; and yet none of them had any intelligence given them of it before hand by any of their gods or prophets, *there is none that knoweth* (*ver. 26.*) *none that declareth*, none that gives the least intimation of it, there is none of the nations that heareth your words, that can pretend to have heard from their gods such words as you, O Israelites, have heard from your God, by your prophets, *Psal. cxlvii. 20.* There is none of all the gods of the nations that have shewed their worshippers the way of salvation, which God will shew by the Messiah. The good tidings which the Lord will send in the gospel, is a mystery hid from ages and generations, *Rom. xvi. 25, 26.*

2. None of those who pleaded for them could produce any instance of their knowledge or power, that had in it any colour of proof that they were gods; all the advocates were struck dumb with this challenge, *ver. 28. I beheld, and there was no man that could give evidence for them*, even amongst them that were their most zealous admirers, and there was no counsellor, none that could offer any thing for the support of their cause. Even among the idols themselves there were none fit to give counsel in the most trivial matters, and yet there were those that asked counsel of them in the most important and difficult affairs. When I asked them what they had to say for themselves, they stood mute; the case was so plain against them, there was none that could answer a word; judgment must therefore be given against the defendant upon *nil in dictis*: he has nothing to say for himself; he was speechless, *Matt. xxii. 12.*

3. Sentence is therefore given according to the charge exhibited against them, *ver. 24. So it is, behold, they are all vanity*, *ver. 29. they are a lie and a cheat*, they are not in themselves what they pretend to be, nor will their worshippers find that in them which they promise themselves: their works are nothing, of no force, of no worth; their enemies need fear no hurt from them, their worshippers can hope for no good from them. Their molten images, and indeed all their images are wind and confusion, vanity and vexation; those that worship them will be deceived in them, and will reflect upon their own folly with the greatest bitterness: therefore, *dearly beloved, flee from idolatry*, *1 Cor. x. 14.*

CHAPTER XLII.

The prophet seems here to launch out yet further into the prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom, under the type of Cyrus; and having the great work of man's salvation by him yet more in view, he almost forgets the occasion that led him into it, and drops the return out of Babylon: for indeed the prospect of this would be a greater comfort and support to the believing pious Jews in their captivity, than the hope of that. And (as Mr. Gataker well observes) in this, and other like prophecies of Christ, that are covered in types, as *David and Solomon*, some passages agree to the type and not to the truth, others to the truth and not to the type, and many to the type in one sense and the truth in another. Here is, (1.) A prophecy of the Messiah's coming with meekness, and yet with power to do the Redeemer's work, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) His commission opened, which he received from the Father, *ver. 5—9.* (3.) The joy and rejoicings with which the glad tidings of this should be received, *ver. 10, 11, 12.* (4.) The wonderful success of the gospel, for the overthrow of the devil's kingdom, *ver. 13—17.* (5.) The rejection and ruin of the Jews for their unbelief, *ver. 18—25.*

1. **B**EHOOLD my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. 2. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. 4. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment on the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

We are sure that these verses are to be understood of Christ, for the evangelist tells us expressly, that in him this prophecy was fulfilled, *Matt. xii. 17—21.* Behold with an eye of faith; behold and observe; behold and admire my servant whom I uphold. Let the Old Testament saints behold and expect him: let the New Testament saints behold and remember him. Now what must we behold and consider concerning him?

1. The Father's concern for him, and relation to him; the confidence he put, and the complacency he took in him. This put an honour upon him, and made him remarkable above any thing, *ver. 1.* (1.) God owns him as one employed for him; he is my servant. Though he was a son, yet as a mediator he took upon him the form of a servant; learned obedience to the will of God, and practised it, and laid out himself to advance the interests of God's kingdom, and so he was God's servant. (2.) As one chosen by him, he is mine elect; he did not thrust himself into the service, but was called of God, and pitched upon as the fittest person for it; infinite wisdom made the choice and then avowed it. (3.) As one he put a confidence in; he is my servant on whom I lean, so some read it. The Father put a confidence in him, that he would go through with his undertaking, and in that confidence brought many sons to glory: it was a great trust which the Father reposed in the Son, but he knew him to be *par negotio*, both able and faithful. (4.) As one he took care of; he is my servant whom I uphold, so we read it. The Father bore him up, and bore him out in his undertaking; both were included in his upholding him: he stood by him, and strengthened him. (5.) As one whom he took an entire complacency in; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: His delight was in him from eternity, when he

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was by him as one brought up with him, *Prov. viii. 30.* He had a particular satisfaction in his undertaking: he declared himself *well pleased in him*, *Matt. iii. 17.*—*xvii. 5.* and therefore loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep. Let our souls delight in Christ, rely on him, and rejoice in him; and thus let us be united to him, and then for his sake the Father will be well pleased in us.

2. The qualification of him for his office. *I have put my Spirit upon him*, to enable him to go through his undertaking, *Isa. xli. 1.* The Spirit did not only come but rest upon him, *Isa. xi. 2.* not by measure, as on others of God's servants, but without measure. Those whom God employeth as his servants, as he will uphold them and be well pleased with them, so he will put his Spirit upon them.

3. The work to which he is appointed; it is to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, *i. e.* in infinite wisdom, holiness, and equity, to set up a religion in the world which the Gentiles should come under the bonds of, and enjoy the blessings of. The judgments of the Lord, which have been hid from the Gentiles, *Psal. cxlvii. 20.* he came to bring forth to the Gentiles, for he was to be a light to lighten them.

4. The mildness and tenderness with which he should pursue this undertaking, *ver. 2, 3.* He shall carry it on, (1.) In silence and without noise; *he shall not strive nor cry*: It shall not be proclaimed, *Where is Christ? or lo, he is there*; as when great princes rise in progress or make a public entry. He shall have no trumpet sounded before him, nor any noisy retinue to follow him. The opposition he meets with, he shall not meet as a giant, but patiently endure the contradiction of sinners against his kingdom, which is spiritual, and therefore its weapons are not carnal, nor its appearance pompous; it cometh not with observation. (2.) Gently and without rigour. Those that are wicked he will be patient with, when he has begun to crush them, so that they are as bruised reeds, he will yet let them have time to repent, and not presently break them; though they are very offensive as smoking flax, *Isa. lvi. 4.* yet he will bear with them, as he did with Jerusalem. Those that are weak he will be tender of; those that have but a little life, a little heat, that are weak as a reed, opposed by doubts and fears as a bruised reed, that are as smoking flax, the work of a candle newly lighted, which is ready to go out again, he will not despise them, will not plead against them with his great power, nor lay upon them more work or more suffering than they can bear, which would crush and quench them, but will graciously consider their frame. More like a candle is expressed; he will not break the bruised reed, but will strengthen it, it may become as a cedar in the courts of our God. He will not quench the smoking flax, but blow it up into a flame. Note, 1. Christ is very tender towards those that have true grace, though they are weak in it; and accepts the willingness of the spirit, pardoning and pulling by the weakness of the flesh.

5. The courage and constancy with which he should persevere in this undertaking so as to carry his point at last, *ver. 4. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged*; though he meets with hard service and much opposition, and feels how ungrateful the world will be, yet he goes on with his part of the work, till he is able to say, *It is finished*; and enables his apostles and ministers to go on with theirs too, and not to fail or be discouraged till they also had finished their testimony. And thus he recomplisheth what he undertook; (1.) He brings forth judgment to the Gentiles, by a long course of miracles, and his resurrection, and so forth, which fully evince the truth of his doctrine, and the divine authority of that holy religion which he came to establish. (2.) He is judge unto the earth; *i. e.* he exercises his government in the world, a church for himself among men, reforms the world, and by the power of his gospel and grace fixeth such principles in the minds of men as tend to make them wise and just. (3.) The isles of the Gentiles wait for his law, wait for his gospel; *i. e.* but it welcome as if it had been a thing they had long waited for. They shall become his disciples, shall sit at his feet, and be ready to receive the law from his mouth; *what wilt thou have us to do?*

4. ¶ Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: 6. I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles: 7. To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. 8. I am the LORD, that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. 9. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. 10. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein: the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. 11. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12. Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.

Here is, 1. The covenant God made with, and the commission he gave to the Messiah, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* which is an exposition of *ver. 1. Behold my servant whom I uphold.*

1. The royal titles by which the great God here makes himself known, and distinguisheth himself from all pretenders, speak very much his glory *ver. 5. Thus saith God the LORD*: and who art thou, Lord? Why, he is the fountain of all being, and therefore the fountain of all power. He is the fountain of all being, (1.) In the upper world, for he created the heavens, and stretched them out, *chap. xi. 22.* and keeps the vast expanse still upon the stretch. (2.) In the lower world; for he spread forth the earth, and made it a capacious habitation, and that which comes out of it is produced by his power. (3.) In the world of mankind; he gives breath to the people upon it, not only air to breathe in, but the breath of life itself, and organs to breathe with; nay, he gives spirit, the powers and faculties of a rational soul to them that walk therein. Now this is prefixed to God's covenant with the Messiah, and the commission given him not only to shew that he has authority to make such a covenant, and give such a commission and had power sufficient to bear him out; but that the design of the work of redemption

tion was to maintain the honour of the Creator, and to reduce man to the allegiance he owes to God as his Maker.

2. The assurances which he gives to the Messiah of his presence with him in all he did pursuant to his undertaking, speak very much encouragement to him, *ver. 6.* (1.) God owns that the Messiah did not take the honour of being Mediator to himself, but was called of God; that he was no intruder, no usurper, but was fairly brought to it, *Heb. v. 4. I have called thee in righteousness*: God not only did him no wrong in calling him to this hard service, he having voluntarily offered himself to it; but did himself right in providing for his own honour, and performing the word which he had spoken. (2.) He promiseth to stand by him and strengthen him in it; to hold his hand, not only to his work, but in it: to hold his hand that it might not shake, that it might not fail, and so to keep him. When an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him in his agonies, and the Father himself was with him, then his promise was fulfilled. Note, Those whom God calls he will own and help, and will hold their hands.

3. The great intentions of this commission speak abundance of comfort to the children of men; he was given for a covenant of the people, for a mediator or guarantee of the covenant of grace, which is all summed up in him. God in giving us Christ, has with him freely given us all the blessings of the new covenant. Two glorious blessings Christ in his gospel brings with him to the Gentile world, light and liberty. (1.) He is given for a light to the Gentiles, not only to reveal to them what they were concerned to know, and which otherwise they could not have known: but to open the blind eyes, that they might know it: by his Spirit in the word he presents the object, by his Spirit in the heart he prepares the organ. When the gospel came, light came, a great light to them that sat in darkness, *Mat. iv. 16. John iii. 17.* And St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles to open their eyes, *Acts xxvi. 18.* Christ is the light of the world. (2.) He is sent to proclaim liberty to the captives as Cyrus did, to bring out the prisoners; not only to open the prison-doors and give them leave to go out, which was all that Cyrus could do; but to bring them out, to induce and enable them to make use of their liberty, which none did but those whose spirits God stirred up. This Christ doth by his grace.

2. The ratification and confirmation of this grant: that we may be assured of the validity of it, consider,

(1.) The authority of him that makes the promise, *ver. 8. I am the Lord, Jehovah, that is my name*, and that was the name by which he made himself known when he began to perform the promise made to the patriarchs; whereas before he manifested himself by the name of God Almighty, *Exod. vi. 3.* If he is the Lord that gives being and birth to all things, he will give being and birth to this promise. If his name be Jehovah, which speaks him God alone, we may be sure his name is Jealous, and he will not give his glory to another, whoever it is that stands in competition with him, especially not to graven images. Therefore he will send the Messiah to open men's eyes, that so he may turn them from the service of dumb idols to serve the living God; because though he has long winked at the times of ignorance, he will now maintain his prerogative, and will not give his glory to graven images. Therefore he will perform his word, because he will not lose the honour of being true to it, nor be ever charged with falsehood by the worshippers of false gods. Therefore he will deliver his people from under the power of idolaters, because it looks as if he had given his praise to graven images, when he gives up his own worshippers to be worshippers of images.

(2.) The accomplishment of the promises he had formerly made concerning his church; which are proofs of the truth of his word, and the kindness he bears to his people, *ver. 9. Behold the former things are to come to pass*; hitherto the Lord hath helped his church, hath supported her under former burdens, relieved her in former straits. And this in performance of the promises made to the fathers; *there has not failed one word*, *1 Kings viii. 56.* And now new things do I declare: now I will make new promises, which shall as certainly be fulfilled in their season as old ones were; now I will bestow new favours, such as have not been conferred formerly. Old Testament blessings you have had abundantly, now I declare New Testament blessings; not a fruitful country and a dominion over your neighbours, but *spiritual blessings in heavenly things. Before they spring forth* in the preaching of the gospel I tell you of them, under the type and figure of the former things. Note, The receipt of former mercies may encourage us to hope for farther mercies; for God is constant in his care for his people, and his compassions are still new.

3. The song of joy and praise which should be sung hereupon, to the glory of God, *ver. 10. Sing unto the Lord a new song*, a New Testament song. The giving of Christ for a light to the Gentiles, *ver. 6.* was a new thing and very surprising: the apostle speaks of it as a mystery which in other ages was not made known, as it is now revealed, *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, *Eph. iii. 5, 6.* Now this being the new thing which God declares, the newness of the song which is to be sung on this occasion is this; that whereas before the songs of the Lord were very much confined to the temple at Jerusalem; David's psalms were in the language of the Jews only, and sung by them, and in their own country only; for when they were in a strange land they hung their harps on the willow-trees, and could not sing the Lord's song as we find, *Psal. cxxxvii. 2, 3, 4.* Now the songs of holy joy and praise shall be sung all the world over; the Gentile nations shall share equally with the Jews in New Testament blessings, and therefore shall join in New Testament praises and acts of worship. There shall be churches set up in Gentile nations, and they shall sing a new song. The conversion of the Gentiles is often foretold under this notion, as appears, *Rom. xv. 9, 10, 11.*

It is here promised that the praises of God's grace shall be sung with joy and thankfulness; (1.) By those that live in the end of the earth, in countries that lie most remote from Jerusalem; *From the uttermost parts of the earth have we heard songs*, chap. xxiv. 16. This was fulfilled when Christianity was planted in our land. (2.) By mariners and merchants, and those that go down to the sea, that do business in great waters, and suck the riches of the sea, and so make themselves masters of the fulness thereof and all that is therein, with which they shall praise God, and justly, for it is his, *Psal. xxiv. 1.—xcv. 5.* The Jews traded little at sea, if therefore God's praises be sung by them that go down to sea, it must be by Gentiles; sea-faring men are called upon to praise God, *Psal. cvii. 23.* (3.) By the islands and the inhabitants thereof, *ver. 10.* and again, *ver. 12.* let them declare his praise in the islands, the isles of the Gentiles; probably referring to the islands of Greece. (4.) By the wilderness and the cities thereof, and the villages of Kedar. These lay east from Jerusalem, as the islands lay west, so that the gospel songs should be sung from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. The whole Gentile world had been like an island, cut off from communication with God's church, and like a wilderness uncultivated and bringing forth no fruit to God; but now the islands and the wilderness shall praise God: (5.) By the inhabitants of the rock, and those that dwell on the tops of the mountains, not only the Gentiles but the poorest, and meanest, and most despicable; they that dwell in cottages as well as those that inhabit cities and villages. The rude and most bar-

barons, as the mountaineers commonly are, shall be civilized by the gospel. Or by the inhabitants of the rock may be meant the inhabitants of that part of Arabia which is called *Petra*, the rocky. Perhaps the neighbouring countries shared in the joy of the Israelites when they returned out of Babylon, and some of them came and joined with them in their praises. But we find not that it was to any such degree as might fully answer this illustrious prophecy, and must conclude that it reaches farther, and was fulfilled in that which many other prophecies of the joy of the nations are said in the New Testament to be fulfilled, *viz.* the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ; when they are brought into the church, they are brought to give glory to the Lord; then they are to him for a praise and a name, and they make it their business to praise him. He is glorified in them, and glorified by them.

13. The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. 14. I have long time holden my peace: I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travelling woman; I will destroy and devour at once. 15. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs: and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. 16. And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. 17. ¶ They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.

It comes all to one, whether we make these verses (as some do) the song itself that is to be sung by the Gentile world, or a prophecy of what God will do to make way for the singing of that song, that evangelical new song.

1. He will appear in his power and glory more than ever; so he did in the preaching of his gospel, and that divine power and energy which went along with it, and the wonderful success it had in the pulling down of Satan's strongholds, *ver. 13, 14.* He had long holden his peace, and been still, and refrained himself while he winked at the times of the ignorance of the Gentile world, *Acts xvii. 30.* and suffered all nations to walk on in their own ways, *Acts xiv. 16.* But now he shall go forth as a mighty man, as a man of war, to attack the devil's kingdom, and give it a fatal blow. The going forth of the gospel is thus represented, *Rev. vi. 2.* Christ in it went forth conquering and to conquer. The ministry of the apostles is called their warfare; and they were the soldiers of Jesus Christ. He shall stir up jealousy, shall appear more jealous than ever for the glory of his own name, and against idolatry. (1.) He shall cry, in the preaching of his word, *cry like a travelling woman*; for the ministers of Christ preached as men in earnest, and that travelled in birth again till they saw Christ formed in the souls of the people, *Gal. iv. 19.* He shall cry, yea roar, in the gospel woes, which are more terrible than the roaring of a lion, and which must be preached along with gospel blessings to awaken a sleeping world. (2.) He shall conquer by the power of his Spirit; *He shall prevail against his enemies*, shall prevail to make them friends, *Col. i. 21.* Those that contradict and blaspheme his gospel, he shall prevail to put them to silence and shame. He will destroy and devour at once all the oppositions of the powers of darkness; Satan shall fall as lightning from heaven, and he that had the power of death shall be destroyed. And as a type and figure of this, to make way for the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon, God will humble the pride, and break the power of their oppressors, and will at once destroy and devour the Babylonian monarchy. In accomplishing this destruction of Babylon by the Persian army under the command of Cyrus, *He will make waste mountains and hills*, level the country, and dry up all their herbs, i. e. the army, as usual, shall either carry off the forage or destroy it; and by laying bridges of boats over rivers shall turn them into islands, and so drain the fens and low grounds, to make way for the march of their army; that the pools shall be dried up. And thus when the gospel shall be preached it shall have a free course, and that which hinders the progress of it shall be taken out of the way.

2. He will manifest his favour and grace towards those whose spirits he had stirred up to follow him, as *Ezra i. 5.* those that ask the way to Zion he will shew the way and lead them in it, *ver. 16.* Those that by nature were blind, and those that being under conviction of sin and wrath, are quite at a loss and know not what to do with themselves, God will lead by a way that they knew not, will shew them the way to life and happiness by Jesus Christ, who is the way, and will conduct and carry them on in that way, which before they were strangers to. Thus in the conversion of Paul, he was struck blind first, and then God revealed his Son in him, and made the scales to fall from his eyes. They are weak in knowledge, and the truths of God first seem unintelligible; but God will make darkness light before them, and knowledge shall be easy to them; They are weak in duty, and the commands of God seem impracticable, and insuperable difficulties are in the way of their obedience; but God will make crooked things straight, their way shall be plain, and the yoke easy. Those whom God brings into the right way, he will guide in it. And as a type of this, he will lead the Jews when they return out of captivity, in a ready road to their own land again, and nothing shall occur to perplex or embarrass them in their journey. These are great things, and kind things, very great and very kind; but lest any should say, they are too great, too kind to be expected from God by such an undeserving people as that of the Jews, such an undeserving world as that of the Gentiles, he adds, *These things will I do unto them*, take my word for it I will, and I will not forsake them: he that begins to shew this great mercy will go on to do them good.

3. He will particularly put those to confusion that adhere to idols, notwithstanding the attempts made by the preaching of the gospel to turn them from idols, *ver. 17.* They shall be turned back, and greatly ashamed that trust in graven images. The Babylonians shall; when they see how the Jews, who despise their images, are owned and delivered by the God they worship without images; and the Gentiles when they see how idolatry falls before the preaching of the gospel, is scattered like darkness before the light of the sun, and melts like snow before its heat, they shall be ashamed that ever they said to these molten images, Ye are our gods: for how can they help their worshippers who cannot help themselves, nor save themselves from falling into contempt? In times of reformation, when many turn from iniquity, and sin, being generally deserted, becomes unfashionable, it may be hoped,

hoped, that those who will not otherwise be reclaimed, will be wrought upon by that consideration to be ashamed of it.

18. Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. 19. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect and blind as the LORD's servant? 20. Seeing many things, but thou observeest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not. 21. The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. 22. But this is a people robbed and spoiled, they are all of them snared in holes and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith restore. 23. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken, and hear for the time to come? 24. Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. 25. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle; and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not: and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

The prophet having spoken by way of comfort and encouragement to the believing Jews that waited for the consolation of Israel, here turns himself to those among them that were unbelieving, for their conviction and humiliation. Among those that were captivated in Babylon, there were some that were as the evil figs in Jeremiah's vision, who were sent thither for their hurt to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, for a reproach and a proverb, Jer. xxiv. 9. And in them there was a type of the Jews that rejected Christ, and were rejected by him, and then fell more than ever under the curse, when those that believed were inheriting the blessing; for they were broken and ruined, and remain dispersed unto this day. Observe,

1. The call that is given to this people, ver. 18. *Hear, ye deaf, and attend to the joyful sound, and look, ye blind that ye may see the joyful light*: there is no absurdity in this command, nor is it unbecoming the wisdom and goodness of God to call us to do that good which yet of ourselves we are not sufficient for: for those who have natural powers, which they may employ so as to do better than they do, and have supernatural grace if it be not their own fault, who yet labour under a moral impotency to that which is good. This call to the deaf to hear, and the blind to see, is like the command given to the man that had the withered hand to stretch it forth, which though he could not do because it was withered, yet if he had not attempted to do it he had not been healed, and his being healed thereupon was owing not to his act, but the divine power.

2. The character that is given of them, ver. 19, 20. *Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger?* The people of the Jews were in possession of God's servants, and their priests and elders his messengers, Mal. vii. 7. but they were deaf and blind. The verbs before may be understood as spoken to the Gentile idolaters when he calls deaf and blind, because they worshipped gods that were so; but, faith he, no wonder ye are deaf and blind, when my own people are as bad as ye, and many of them as much set upon idolatry. He complains of their foolishness, they are blind; and of their stubbornness, they are deaf. They were even worse than the Gentiles themselves: *Corruptio optimi est pessima*. Who is so wilfully, so scandalously blind and deaf as my servant and my messenger? as Jacob who is my servant, chap. xli. 8. and as their prophets and teachers who are my messengers? Who is blind as he that in profession and pretension is perfect, that should come nearer to perfection than other people, their priests and prophets? the one prophesies falsely, and the other bears rule by their means; and who so blind as they that will not see when they have the light shining in their faces? Note, 1. It is a common thing, but a very sad thing, for those that in profession are God's servants and messengers, to be themselves blind and deaf in spiritual things; ignorant, erroneous, and very careless. 2. Blindness and deafness in spiritual things is worse in those that profess themselves to be God's servants and messengers than in others: It is in them the greater sin and shame, the greater dishonour to God, and to themselves a greater damnation.

The prophet goes on, ver. 20. to describe the blindness and obduracy of the Jewish nation, just as our Saviour describes it in his time, Matt. xiii. 14, 15. *Seeing many things, but thou observeest not*. Multitudes are ruined for want of observing that which they cannot but see; they perish not through ignorance, but mere carelessness. The Jews in our Saviour's time saw many proofs of his divine mission, but they did not observe them: they seemed to open their ears to him, but they did not hear, i. e. they did not heed, did not understand, or believe, or obey, and then it was all one as if they had not heard.

3. The care God will take of the honour of his own name, notwithstanding their blindness and deafness, especially of his word, which he has magnified above all, his name. *Shall the unbelief and obstinacy of men make the promise of God of none effect? God forbid*, Rom. iii. 3. No, though they are blind and deaf God will be no loser in his glory, ver. 21. *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake*; not well pleased with their sin, but well pleased in the manifestation of his own righteousness, in rejecting them for rejecting the great salvation. He speaks as one well pleased, Isa. i. 24. *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries*: and Ezek. v. 13. he will be comforted. The scripture was fulfilled in the casting off of the Jews, as well as in the calling in of the Gentiles, and therein the Lord will be well pleased, *He will magnify the law*, i. e. divine revelation in all the parts of it, and will make it honourable. The law is truly honourable, and the things of it are great things, and if men will not magnify it by their obedience to it, God will magnify it himself by punishing them for their disobedience. He will magnify the law by accomplishing what is written in it, will magnify its authority, its efficacy, its equity: He will do it at last, when all men shall be judged by the law of liberty, James ii. 12. He is doing it every day. What is it that God is doing in the world, but magnifying the law, and making it honourable?

4. The calamities God will bring upon the Jewish nation for their wilful blindness and deafness, ver. 22. They are robbed and spoiled. Those that were impenitent and unreformed in Babylon, were sentenced to perpetual captivity: It was for their sins that they were not only spoiled of all their possessions in their own hand, but in the land of their enemies, they

were some of them snared in holes, and others hid in prison-house: they cannot help themselves, for they are snared; their friends cannot help them for they are hid; and their enemies have forgot them in their prisons. They and all they have are for a prey and for a spoil; and there is none that delivereth either by force or ransom; nor any that dares say to the proud oppressors, restore. There they lie, and there they are likely to lie. This had its full accomplishment in the final destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, which God brought upon them for rejecting the gospel of Christ.

5. The counsel given them in order to their relief; for though their case be sad it is not desperate. The generality of them are deaf, they would not hearken to the voice of God's word; he will therefore try his rod, and see who among them will give ear to that, ver. 23. We must not despair concerning those who have been long reasoned with in vain, but that at length some of them will give ear and hearken: if one method do not take effect another may, and sinners shall be left inexcusable. Observe, (1.) We may all of us if we will hear the voice of God, and are called and invited to hear it. (2.) It is worth while to enquire who they are that perceive God speaking to them, and are willing to hear him. (3.) Of the many that hear the voice of God, there are very few that hearken to it or heed it, that hear it with attention and application. (4.) In hearing the word, we must have an eye to the time to come. We must hear for hereafter, for what may occur betwixt us and the grave: we must especially hear for eternity. We must hear the word with another world in our eye. The counsel is,

1. To acknowledge the hand of God in their afflictions, and whoever were the instruments, to have an eye to him as the principal agent, ver. 24. *Who gave Jacob and Israel*, that people that used to have such an interest in heaven, and such a dominion on earth, who gave them for a spoil to the robbers, as they are now to the Babylonians? to the Romans? *Did not the Lord?* You know he did: consider it then, and hear his voice in these judgments.

2. To acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to abandon them, and had brought all these calamities upon themselves. (1.) These punishments were first inflicted on them for their disobedience to the laws of God; it is he against whom we have sinned: the prophet puts himself into the number of the sinners, as Dan. ix. 7, 8. *We have sinned*, we have all brought ineluctable to the fire; and there are those among us that have wilfully refused to walk in his ways. Jacob and Israel had never been given up to the robbers, if they had not by their iniquities sinned themselves: for therefore it is, because they had violated the commands of the law, that God has brought upon them the curses of the law; he hath not dropt, but poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle, i. e. all the desolations of war, which have set him on fire round about; for God surrounds the wicked with his judgments, as he doth the righteous with his favours. See the power of God's anger, not resisting it, no escaping it. See the mischief that it makes, it provokes God to anger against a people, and so kindles an universal conflagration, sets all on fire. (2.) These judgments were continued upon them for their senseless stiffness and incorrigibility under the rod of God. The fire of God's wrath kindled upon him, and he knew it not, was not aware of it, took no notice of the judgments, at least not of the hand of God in them: Nay, it burnt him, and though he could not then but know it and feel it: yet he laid it not to heart, was not awakened by the fiery rebukes he was under, not at all affected with them. And those who are not humbled by lesser judgments must expect greater; for when God judgeth, he will overcome.

CHAP. XLIII.

The contents of this chapter are much the same with that of the foregoing chapter looking at the release of the Jews out of their captivity; but looking through that, and beyond that, to the great work of man's redemption by Jesus Christ, and the grace of the gospel, which, through him, believers partake of. Here are, (1.) Precious promises made to God's people in their affliction, of his presence with them for their support under it, and their deliverance out of it, ver. 1—7. (2.) A challenge to idols to vie with the omniscience and omnipotence of God, ver. 8—13. (3.) Encouragement given to the people of God to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, from the consideration of what God did for their fathers when he brought them out of Egypt, ver. 17—21. (4.) A method taken to prepare the people for their deliverance, by putting them in mind of their sins, by which they had provoked God to send them into captivity, and continue them there, that they might repent, and seek to God for pardoning mercy, ver. 22—28.

1. **BUT** now, thus faith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. 2. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. 4. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. 5. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; 6. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; 7. Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

This chapter has a plain connection with the close of the foregoing chapter but a very surprising one: It was there said that Jacob and Israel would not walk in God's ways, and when he corrected them for their disobedience, they were stubborn and laid it not to heart; and now one would think it should have followed, that God would utterly abandon and destroy them; no, the next words are, but now, *Fear not, O Jacob, O Israel, I have redeemed thee, and thou art mine*. Though many among them were untractable and incorrigible: yet God would continue his love and care for his people, and

and the body of that nation should still be reserved for mercy. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*, Rom. v. 20. and mercy rejoiceth against judgment, as having prevailed and carried the day, Jam. ii. 13.

Now the sun breaking out thus of a sudden from behind a thick and dark cloud shines the brighter, and with a pleasing surprise: The expressions of God's favour and good-will to his people here, are very high, and speak abundance of comfort to all the spiritual seed of upright Jacob and praying Israel; for to us is the gospel preached, as well as unto them that were captives in Babylon. *Hab. iv. 2.*

Here is, 1. The grounds of God's care and concern for his people, and the interests of his church and kingdom among men. Jacob and Israel, though in a sinful, miserable condition, yet shall be looked after: for, (1.) They are God's workmanship, *created by him unto good works*, Eph. ii. 10. He hath created them and formed them, not only given them a being, but this being formed them into a people, constituted their government, and incorporated them by the charter of his covenant. The new creature, wherever it is, is of God's forming, and *he will not forsake the work of his own hands*. (2.) They are the people of his purchase; he hath redeemed them; out of the land of Egypt he first redeemed them, and out of many another bondage, *in his love, and in his pity*, Isa. lxxiii. 9. much more will he take care of those who are redeemed with the blood of his Son. (3.) They are his peculiar people, whom he hath distinguished from others and set apart for himself; he has called them by name, as those he has a particular intimacy with and concern for, and they are his, appropriated to him, and that he has a special interest in. (4.) He is their God in covenant, *ver. 3. I am the Lord thy God*, worshipped by thee, and engaged by promise to thee; *the Holy One of Israel*, i. e. the God of Israel; for the true God is a holy One, and holiness becomes his house. And upon all these accounts he might justly say, *Fear not*, ver. 1. and again, *ver. 5. Fear not*. Those that have God for them, need not fear who or what can be against them.

2. The former instances of this care. (1.) God had purchased them dear; *I gave Egypt for thy ransom*; for Egypt was quite laid waste by one plague after another, all their first-born slain, and all their men of war drowned; and all this to force a way for Israel's deliverance from them. Egypt shall be sacrificed rather than Israel shall be continued in slavery, when the time is come for their release. The Ethiopians had invaded them in Acha's time; but they shall be destroyed, rather than Israel shall be disturbed. And if this was reckoned so great a thing, to give Egypt for their ransom, what reason have we to admire God's love to us in giving his own Son to be a ransom for us, 1 John iv. 20. What is Ethiopia and Seba, all their lives and all their treasures, compared with the blood of Christ; (2.) He had prized them accordingly, and they were very dear to him, *ver. 4. Since thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable*. Note, True believers are precious in God's sight, they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure, *Exod. xix. 5*. he loves them, his delight is in them above any people. his church is his vineyard. And this makes God's people truly honourable, and their name great; for so men are really as they are in God's eye. When the forces of Sennacherib, that they might be diverted from falling upon Israel, were directed by providence to fall upon Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, then God gave those countries for Israel, and shewed how precious his people were in his sight. So some understand it.

3. The further instances God would yet give them of his care and kindness:

1. He would be present with them in their greatest difficulties and dangers, *ver. 2. When thou passest through the waters and the rivers, through the fire and the flame, I will be with thee*, and that shall be thy security; when dangers are very imminent and threatening, thou shalt be delivered out of them. Did they in their journey pass through deep waters, they should not perish in them; *the rivers shall not overflow thee*. Should they by their persecutors be cast into a fiery furnace for their constant adherence to their God, yet then the flame should not kindle upon them; which was fulfilled in the letter in the wonderful preservation of the three children, *Dan. iii.* Though they went through fire and water, which would be to them as the valley of the shadow of death; yet while they had God with them, they need fear no evil, they shall be borne up, and brought out into a wealthy place, *Psal. lxxvi. 12.*

2. He would still, when there was occasion, make all the interests of the children of men truckle to the interests of his own children; *I will give men for thee*, great men, mighty men, and men of war, and people, men by wholesale for thy life. Nations shall be sacrificed to thy welfare. All shall be cut off rather than God's Israel shall, so precious are they in his sight. The affairs of the world shall all be ordered and directed so as to be most for the good of the church, *2 Chron. xvi. 9.*

3. Those of them that were scattered and dispersed in other nations, should all be gathered in, and share in the blessings of the public, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* Some of the seed of Israel were dispersed into all countries, east, west, north and south, or into all the parts of the country of Babylon; but those whose spirits God stirred up to go to Jerusalem should be fetched in from all parts, the divine grace should reach those that lay most remote, and at the greatest distance from each other; and when the time was come, nothing should prevent their coming together to return in a body; in answer to that prayer, *Psal. cvi. 47. Gather us from among the heathen*, and in performance of that promise, *Deut. xxx. 4. If any of thine be driven to the utmost parts of heaven, thence will the Lord thy God gather thee*: which we had pleaded on behalf of the children of the captivity, *Neh. i. 9.* But who are the seed of Israel that shall be thus carefully gathered in? He tells us, *ver. 7.* they are such as God has marked for mercy; for, (1.) They are called by his name, they make profession of religion, and are distinguished from the rest of the world by their covenant relation to God, and denomination from him. (2.) They are created for his glory; the spirit of Israelites is created in them, and they are formed according to the will of God, and these shall be gathered in. Note, Those only are fit to be called by the name of God, that are created by his grace for his glory: And those whom God hath created and called, shall be gathered in now to Christ as their head, and hereafter to heaven as their home: *He shall gather in the elect from the four winds*. This promise points at the gathering in of the dispersed of the Gentiles, and the strangers scattered by the gospel of Christ, who died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad: For the promise was to all that were afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call and create. God is with the church, and therefore let her not hear, none that belong to her shall be lost.

8. ¶ Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. 9. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses that they

may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is truth*. 10. Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. 11. I, even I, am the LORD, and beside me there is no saviour. 12. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God. 13. Yea before the day was I am he: and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

God here challengeth the worshippers of idols to produce such proofs of the divinity of their false Gods, as even this very instance (to go no farther) of the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon, furnished the people of Israel with to prove that their God is the true and living God, and he only.

1. The patrons of idolatry are here called to appear and say what they have to say in defence of their idols, *ver. 8, 9.* The gods have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, and they that make them, as I trust in them, are like unto them, so David had said, *Psal. cxv. 8.* to which the prophet here refers, when he calls idolaters blind people that have eyes, and deaf people that have ears. They have the shape and capacities, but want the soul of men; but they are in effect destitute of reason and common sense: for they would never worship gods of their own making; *Let all the nations therefore be gathered together*, let them help one another, and with a combined force plead the cause of their dunghill gods. And if they have nothing to say in their own justification, let them hear what the God of Israel hath to say for their conviction and confutation.

2. God's witnesses are subpoenaed, or summoned to appear and give in evidence for him, *ver. 10. Ye, O Israelites, all ye that are called by my name*, ye are all my witnesses, and so is my servant whom I have chosen: It was Christ himself that was so described, *chap. xlii. 1. My servant and mine elect*. All the prophets that testified to Christ, and Christ himself the great prophet, are here appealed to as God's witnesses. (1.) God's people are witnesses for him, and can attest upon their own knowledge and experience concerning the power of his grace, the sweetness of his comforts, the tenderness of his providence, and the truth of his promise. They will be forward to witness for him that he is gracious, and no word of his has fallen to the ground. (2.) His prophets are in a particular manner witnesses for him, with whom his secret is, and who know more of him than others do. But the Messiah especially is given to be a witness for him to the people; having lain in his bosom from eternity he has declared him. Now,

1. Let us see what the point is which these witnesses are called to prove, *ver. 12. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God*. Note, Those who do themselves acknowledge that the Lord is God, should be ready to testify what they know of him to others, that they also may be brought to the acknowledgment of it; *I believe, therefore I have spoken*. Particularly, since you cannot but know, and believe, and understand, you must be ready to bear record, (1.) That I am he, the only true God, that I am a being self-existent, and self-sufficient; I am he whom you are to fear, and worship, and trust in: *Nay, ver. 13. before the day was, before the first day of time, before the creation of the light, and consequently from eternity, I am he*. The idols were but of yesterday, new gods, that came newly up, *Deut. xxxii. 17.* but the God of Israel was from everlasting. (2.) There was no God formed before me, nor shall be after me. The idols were gods formed, (*Dei facti*, or rather *ficti*) by nature they are no gods, *Gal. iv. 8.* And God had a being from eternity, yea, and a religion in this world, before there were either idols or idolaters; truth is more ancient than error; and he will have a being to eternity, and will be worshipped and glorified when idols are famished and abolished, and idolatry shall be no more. True religion will keep its ground, and survive all opposition and competition; *great is the truth and will prevail*. (3.) That I, even I am the Lord, the great Jehovah, who is, and was, and is to come; and besides me there is no Saviour, *ver. 11.* See what it is that the great God glories in, not so much that he is the alone Ruler, as that he is the alone Saviour; for he delights to do good, is the Saviour of all men, *1 Tim. iv. 10.*

2. Let us see what the proofs are, which are produced for the confirmation of this point. It appears,

1. That the Lord is God, by two proofs. (1.) He has an infinite and infallible knowledge, as is evident from the predictions of his word, *ver. 12. I have declared, and I have shewed* that which has without fail come to pass; nay, I never declared or shewed any thing, but it has been accomplished; *I shewed when there was no strange god among you*; i. e. when you pretended not to consult any oracles but mine, or to have any prophets but mine. It is said, when they came out of Egypt that *the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him*. (1.) He has an infinite and irresistible power, as is evident from the performances of his providence. He pleads not only I have shewed, but I have saved, not only foretold what none else could foresee, but done what none else could do; for, *ver. 13. None can deliver out of my hand* those whom I will punish; not only no man can, but none of all the gods of the heathen can protect. It is therefore a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, because there is no getting out of them again. I will work what I have designed both in mercy and judgment, and who shall either oppose or retard it?

2. That the gods of the heathen, who are rivals with him, are not only inferior to him, but no gods at all; which is proved, *ver. 9.* by a challenge, *Who among them can declare this that I now declare?* Who can foretell things to come? Nay, which of them can shew us former things? *chap. xli. 22.* They cannot so much as inspire an historian, much less a prophet: They are challenged to join issue upon this; *Let them bring forth their witnesses*, to prove their omniscience and omnipotence: And, (1.) If they do prove them, they shall be justified, the idols in demanding homage, and the idolaters in paying it. (2.) If they do not prove them, let them say, *It is truth*, i. e. let them own the true God, and receive the truth concerning him that he is God alone. The cause of God is not afraid to stand a fair trial; but it may reasonably be expected, that those who cannot justify themselves in their irreligion, should submit to the power of the truth and true religion.

14. ¶ Thus saith the LORD your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. 15. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your king. 16. Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way

way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters: 17. Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power: They shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow. 18. ¶ Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. 19. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. 20. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. 21. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

To so low an ebb was the faith and hope of God's people in Babylon brought, that there needed line upon line to assure them that they should be released out of their captivity; and therefore that they might have strong consolation, the assurances of it are often repeated, and here very expressly and encouragingly.

1. God here takes to himself such titles of his honour as were very encouraging to them; He is *the Lord the Redeemer*; not only that will redeem them, but will take it upon him as his office, and make it his business: if he be their God, he will be all that to them which they need, and therefore when they are in bondage he will be their Redeemer; he is *the Holy One of Israel*; and again, *ver. 15. their Holy One*, and therefore will make good every word he has spoken to them. He is the Creator of Israel, that made them a people out of nothing, (for that creation) nay, worse than nothing; and he is their King, that owns them as his people, and presides among them.

2. He assures them he would find out a way to break the power of their oppressors that held them captives, and filled up the measure of their own iniquity by their resolution never to let them go, *chap. xiv. 17.* God will take care to send a victorious prince and army to Babylon; that should bring down all their nobles, and lay their honour in the dust, and all their people too, even the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships, for seamen use to be noisy; or whose cry is to the ships, as their refuge when the city is taken, that they may escape by the benefit of their great river. Note, The destruction of Babylon must make way for the enlargement of God's people: and in the prediction of the fall of the New Testament Babylon we meet with the cries and lamentations of the sailors, *Rev. xviii. 17.* And observe, It is for Israel's sake that Babylon is ruined, to make way for their deliverance.

3. He reminds them of the great things he did for their fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt; for so it may be read, *ver. 16, 17. Thus saith the Lord, which did make a way in the sea, the Red-sea, and did bring forth Pharaoh's chariot and horse, that they might lie down together in the bottom of the sea, and never rise, but be extinct.* He that did this, can, if he pleaseth, make a way for you in the sea, when you return out of Babylon, and will do it rather than leave you there. Note, For the encouragement of our faith and hope, it is good for us often to remember what God has done formerly for his people against his and their enemies. Think particularly what he did at the Red-sea; how he made it, (1.) A road to his people, a straight way, a near way; nay, a refuge to them, into which they fled and were safe, the waters being a wall unto them. (2.) A grave to his enemies. The chariot and horse were drawn out by him who is Lord of hosts, on purpose that they might fall together; howbeit, *they meant not so*, Micah iv. 11, 12.

4. He promiseth to do yet greater things for them than he had done in the days of old; so they should have reason to ask in a way of complaint, as Gideon did, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* for they should see them repeated, nay, they should see them outdone, *ver. 18. Remember not the former things, from them to take occasion as some do, to undervalue the present things, as if the former days were better than these; no, you may if you will comparatively forget them, and yet know enough by the events of your own day to convince you that the Lord is God alone; for, Behold, the Lord will do a new thing, no way inferior both for the wonder and the worth of the mercy to the things of old.* The best exposition of this is, *Jer. xvi. 14, 15.—xxiii. 7, 8. It shall no more be said, the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; that is an old thing, the remembrance of which will be in a manner lost in the new thing, in the new proof that the Lord liveth, for he brought up the children of Israel out of the land of the north.* Though former mercies must not be forgotten, fresh mercies must in a special manner be improved. Now it springs forth, as it were a surprise upon you; you are like them that dream, *Shall you not know it?* and will ye not own God's hand in it?

5. He promiseth not only to deliver them out of Babylon, but to conduct them safely and comfortably to their own land, *ver. 19, 20. I will make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert; for it seems the way from Babylon to Canaan, as well as from Egypt, lay through a desert land; which while the returning captives passed through, God would provide for them, that their camp should be both well victualled and under a good conduct.* The same power that made a way in the sea, *ver. 16.* can make a way in the wilderness, and will force its passage through the greatest difficulties: and he that made dry land in the waters, can produce waters in the driest land; in such abundance, as not only to give drink to his people, his chosen; but to the beast of the field, also the dragons and the ostriches, who are therefore said to honour God for it; *i. e.* It is such a sensible refreshment, and yields them so much satisfaction, that if they were capable of doing it, they would praise God for it, and shame man, who is made capable of praising his benefactor, and doth not. Now, (1.) This looks back to what God did for Israel, when he led them through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan, and fetched water out of a rock to follow them; what God did for them formerly, he would do again, for he is still the same. And though we do not find that the miracle was repeated in their return out of Babylon, yet the mercy was, in the common course of providence, for which they ought to be no less thankful to God. (2.) It looks forward, not only to all the instances of God's care of the Jewish church in the latter ages of it, betwixt their return from Babylon and the coming of Christ, but to the grace of the gospel, especially as it is manifested to the Gentile world, by which a way is opened in the wilderness and rivers in the desert; *i. e.* the world that lay like a desert in ignorance and unfruitfulness, was blessed with a divine conduct and divine comforts, and in order to both with a plentiful effusion of the Spirit. The sinners of the Gentiles that had been as the beasts of the field running wild, fierce as the dragons, stupid as the owls or ostriches, shall be brought to honour God for the extent of his grace to his chosen among them.

6. He runs up all these promised blessings to their great original, the purposes and designs of his own glory, *ver. 21. This people have I formed*;

for myself, and therefore I do all this for them, that they may shew forth my praise. Note, 1. The church is of God's forming, and so are all the living members of it. The new heavens, the new earth, the new man, are the work of God's hand, and are no more, no better than he makes them; they are fashioned according to his will. 2. He forms it for himself; he that is the first cause is the highest end, both of the first and of the new creation. The Lord hath made all things for himself, his Israel especially, to be to him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise; and no otherwise can they be for him or serviceable to him, but as his grace is glorified in them. *Jer. xiii. 11. Eph. i. 6—12—14.* 3. It is therefore our duty to shew forth his praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service: as he formed us, so he feeds us, and keeps us, and leads us, and all for himself; for every instance therefore of his goodness we must praise him, else we answer not the end of the being and blessings we have.

22. ¶ But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. 23. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. 24. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. 25. I, even I, am he that blot out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. 26. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. 27. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. 28. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse and Israel to reproaches.

This charge, and a high charge it is, which is here exhibited against Jacob and Israel, God's professing people, comes in here, (1.) To clear God's Justice in bringing them into captivity and to vindicate that. Were they not in covenant with him? Had they not his sanctuary among them? Why then did the Lord deal thus with this land? *Deut. xxix. 24.* Here is a good reason given; they had neglected God and had cast him off, and therefore he justly rejected them and gave them to the curse, *ver. 23.* And they must be brought to own this before they are prepared for deliverance; and they did so, *Dan. ix. 5. Neh. ix. 33.* (2.) To advance God's mercy in their deliverance, and to make that appear more glorious. Many things are before observed to magnify the power of God in it; but this magnifies his goodness, that he should do such great and kind things for a people that had been so very provoking to him, and were now suffering the just punishment of their iniquity. The pardoning of their sin was as great an instance of God's power (for so Moses reckons it, *Numb. xiv. 17.*) as the breaking of the yoke of their captivity. Now observe here,

1. What the sins are they are here charged with: (1.) Omissions of the good which God had commanded; and this part of the charge is here much insisted upon. And observe how it comes in with a *but*; compare *verse 21.* where God tells them what favours he had bestowed upon them, and what his just expectations were from them; he had formed them for himself, intending they should shew forth his praise. But they had not done so; they had frustrated God's expectations from them, and made very ill returns to him for his favours. For, (1.) They had cast off prayer, *Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.* Jacob was a man famous for prayer, *Heb. xii. 4.* his seed bore his name but did not tread in his steps, and therefore are justly upbraided with it: God takes it ill when children degenerate from the virtue and devotion of their pious ancestors. To boast of the name of Jacob, and yet live without prayer, is to mock God and deceive ourselves: If Jacob doth not call upon God, who will? (2.) They were grown sick of their religion. Thou art Israel, the seed not only of a praying but of a prevailing father, that was a prince with God; and yet not valuing his experiences any more than his example, *thou hast been weary of me.* They had been in relation to God, employed in his service, and in communion with him; but they began to snuff at it, and to say, *Behold what a weariness is it!* Note, Those who neglect to call upon God, do in effect tell him they are weary of him, and have a mind to change their matter. (3.) They grudged the expenses of their devotion, and were niggardly and penurious in it; they were for a cheap religion; and in those acts of devotion that were costly, they desired to be excused: they had not brought, no not their small cattle, the lamb, and kids, which God required for burnt offerings, *ver. 23.* much less did they bring their greater cattle; pretending they could not spare them, they must have them for the maintenance of their families. So little sense had they of the greatness of God and their obligations to him, that they could not find in their hearts to part with a lamb out of their flock for his honour, though he called for it and would graciously accept it. Sweet cane, or calamus, was used for the holy oil, incense, and perfume; but they were not willing to be at the charge of that, *ver. 24.* what they had must serve, though it was old and good for nothing, they would not buy fresh. Perhaps it was usual for devout pious persons to bring free-will incense, as well as other free-will offerings; but they were not so generous: nor did they fill the altar of God, nor moisten it abundantly as they should have done with the fat of their sacrifices; what sacrifices they did bring were of the lean and refuse of their cattle, that had no fat in them to regale the altar with. (4.) What sacrifices they did offer they did not honour God with them, and so they were in effect as no sacrifices, *ver. 23. Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices.* Some of them offered their sacrifices to false gods; others that offered them to the true God, were either careless in the manner of it, or hypocritical in their intentions, so that they might be truly said not to honour God with them, but rather to dishonour him.

And that which aggravated their neglect or sacrificing was, that as God had appointed it, it was no hard some thing; it was not a service that they had any reason at all to complain of: *I have not caused thee to serve with an offering; i. e.* I have not made it a task and drudgery to you, whatever you, through the corruption of your nature, have made it yourselves: I have not wearied thee with incense. None of God's commandments are grievous, no not those concerning sacrifice and incense. They were not more costly than might be afforded by them that lived in such a plentiful country; nor did their attendance on them require any more time than they could well spare. But that which especially forbade them to call it a wearisome service was, that they were required to be cheerful and pleasant, and to rejoice before God in all their approaches to him, *Deut. xii. 12.* They had many feasts and good days; but only one day in all the year in which they were to afflict

afflict their souls. The ordinances of the ceremonial law, though in comparison with Christ's easy yoke they are spoken of as heavy, *Mat. xv. 10.* yet in comparison with the service that idolaters did to their false gods, they were light and not to be called servitudes, or found fault with as wearisome. God did not require them to sacrifice their children as Moloch did.

(2.) Commissions of the evil which God had forbidden; and omissions commonly make way for commissions: *Thou hast made me to serve with thy sin.* When we make God's gifts the food and fuel of our lusts, and his providence to patronise our wicked projects, especially when we encourage ourselves to continue in sin, because grace hath abounded, then we make God to serve with our sins: or it may note what a grief and burden sin is to God; it doth not only weary men and make the creation groan, but it wears my God also, *Isa. vii. 13.* and makes the creator complain that he is grieved, *Psal. xc. 10.* that he is broken, *Ezek. vi. 9.* that he is pressed with sinners, *as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves,* *Amos ii. 1.* and cry out, *Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries,* *Isa. i. 24.* The antithesis is observable; God had not made them to serve with their sacrifices, but they had made him to serve with their sins. The Master had not tired the servants with his commands, but they had tired him with their disobedience. Those wicked servants indeed that carry it so ill to so good a master; God is tender of our comfort, but we are careless of his honour. Let this engage us to keep close to our duty, that is easy and reasonable, and no disparagement to us, nor too hard for us.

2. What were the aggravations of their sin, *ver. 27.* (1.) That they were children of disobedience; for their first father, i. e. their forefathers had sinned; and they had not only sinned in their loins, but sinned like them. *Ezra* confessed this, *Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass,* *chap. ix. 7.* But their forefathers are called their first father to put us in mind of the apostacy and rebellion of our first father Adam, to which corrupt fountain we must run up the streams of all our transgressions. (2.) That they were scholars of disobedience too, for their teachers had transgressed against God; were guilty of gross scandalous sins, and the people no doubt would learn to do as they did. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, and their teachers that should reform them, corrupt them.

3. What were the tokens of God's displeasure against them for their sins *ver. 21.* He brought ruin both upon church and state: (1.) The honour of their church was laid in the dust and trampled on; *I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary,* i. e. the priests and Levites that presided with great dignity and power in the temple service; they profaned themselves, and made themselves vile by their enormities; and then God profaned them, and made them vile by their calamities and the contempt they fell into, *Mal. ii. 9.* (2.) The honour of their state was ruined likewise; *I have given Jacob to the curse,* i. e. to be cursed, and hated, and abused by all their neighbours, and Israel to reproach, to be insulted, ridiculed, and triumphed over by their enemies. They reproached them perhaps for that in that was good: they mocked at their sabbaths, *Lam. i. 7.* but God gave them up to reproach, to correct them for what was amiss. Note, The dishonour which men at any time do us, should humble us for the dishonour we have done to God; and therefore we must bear it patiently because we suffer it justly; and must acknowledge that to us belong confusion.

4. What were the riches of God's mercy towards them notwithstanding, *ver. 25.* *I, even I am he who for this blot out thy transgressions.* This gracious declaration of God's readiness to pardon sin comes in very strangely: the charge run very high, *thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities,* *ver. 24.* Now one would think it should follow, *I, even I am he that will destroy thee and burden myself no longer with care about thee.* No, *I, even I am he that will forgive thee;* as if the great God would teach us, that forgiving injuries is the best way to make ourselves easy, and to keep them to repent, because there is forgiveness with God, and to shew the freeness of divine mercy; where sin has been exceeding sinful, grace appears exceeding gracious. Apply this (1.) To the forgiving of the sins of Israel, as a people in their natural capacity: when God stopped the course of threatening judgments and saved them from utter ruin, even then when he had them under severe rebukes, then he might be said to blot out their transgressions, though he corrected them, he was reconciled to them again, and did not cut them off from being a people. This he did many a time, till they rejected Christ and his gospel, which was a sin against the remedy, and then he would forgive them no more as a nation, but utterly destroyed them. (2.) To the forgiving of the sins of every particular believing penitent: transgressions and sins, infirmities though never so numerous, backslidings though never so heinous. Observe here, (1.) How the pardon is expressed; he will blot them out, as a cloud is blotted out by the beams of the sun, *chap. xlv. 22.* as a debt is blotted out not to appear against the debtor; the book is crossed as if the debt were paid, because it is pardoned upon the payment which the surety has made; or as a sentence is blotted out when it is reversed; as the curse is blotted out with the waters of jealousy, which made it of no effect to the innocent, *Numb. v. 23.* He will not remember the sin, which intimates not only that he will remit the punishment of what is past, but it shall be no diminution to his love for the future. When God forgives he forgets. (2.) What is the ground and reason of the pardon. It is not for the sake of any thing in us, but for his own sake; for his mercy's sake; his promise's sake, and especially for his Son's sake; and that he may himself be glorified in it. (3.) How God glories in it; *I, even I am he;* he glories in it as his prerogative; none can forgive sin but God only, and he will do it, it is his settled resolution; he will do it willingly and with delight; it is his pleasure, it is his honour, so he is pleased to reckon it.

These words, *ver. 26.* *Put me in remembrance,* may be understood either, (1.) As a rebuke to a proud Pharisee, that stands upon his own justification before God, and expects to find favour for his merits, and not to be beholden to free grace. If you have any thing to say in your own justification, any thing to offer for the sake of which you should be pardoned, and not for my sake, put me in remembrance of it; I will give you leave to plead your own cause with me, declare what your merits are that you may be justified by them: but those who are thus challenged will be speechless. Or, (2.) As a direction and encouragement to a penitent publican. Is God thus ready to pardon sin? and when he pardons it will he remember it no more? Let us then put him in remembrance, mention before him those sins which he has forgiven; for they must be ever before us to humble us, though they are pardoned, *Psal. li. 3.* Put him in remembrance of the promises he has made to the penitent, and the satisfaction his Son has made for them. Plead these with him in wrestling for pardon, and declare these things in order that thou mayest be justified freely by his grace. This is the only way, and it is a sure way to peace: only acknowledge thy transgression.

C H A P. XLIV.

God by the prophet goes on in this chapter as before, (1.) To encourage his people with the assurance of great blessings he had in store for them at their return out of captivity, and those typical of much greater,

which the gospel-church, his spiritual Israel, should partake of in the days of the Messiah: and hereby he proves himself to be God alone against all pretenders, *ver. 1—8.* (2.) To expose the foolishness and amazing folly of idol-makers and idol worshippers, *ver. 9—20.* (3.) To ratify and confirm the assurances he had given to his people of those great blessings, and to raise their joyful and believing expectations of them, *ver. 21—28.*

1. YET now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: 2. Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee? Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. 3. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: 4. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. 5. One shall say, I am the LORD's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. 6. Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God. 7. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it and set in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. 8. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Two great truths are abundantly made out in these verses:

1. That the people of God are a happy people, especially upon account of the covenant that is between them and God. The people of Israel were so as a figure of the gospel-Israel.

These three things complete their happiness:

(1.) The covenant relations wherein they stand to God, *ver. 1, 2.* Israel is here called Jeshurun, the upright one; for those only, like Nathaniel, are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile; and those only shall have the everlasting benefit of the promises. Jacob and Israel had been repented in the close of the foregoing chapter as very provoking and obnoxious to God's wrath, and already given to the curse and to reproaches: but as if God's bowels yearned towards him, and his repenting were kindled together, mercy steps in with a non-obstante to all those quarrels; *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant;* thou and I will be friends again for all this. God had said, *chap. xliii. 25.* *I am he that blot out thy transgression;* which is the only thing that creates this distance, and when that is taken away the streams of mercy run again their former channel. The pardon of sin is the inlet of all the other blessings of the covenant; so and so I will do for them, saith God, *Heb. viii. 12.* *For I will be merciful to their iniquities;* therefore hear, O Jacob; hear these comfortable words; therefore fear not, O Jacob; fear not thy sins, for they are pardoned; fear not thy troubles, for by the pardon of sin the property of them too is altered.

Now the relations wherein they stand to him are very encouraging: (1.) They are his servants; and those that serve him he will own and stand by, and see that they be not wronged. (2.) They are his chosen, and he will abide by his choice; he knows them that are his, and whom he has chosen he takes under special protection. (3.) They are his creatures; he made them and brought them into being: he formed them and cast them into shape: he began betimes with them, for he formed them from the womb; and therefore he will help them over their difficulties, and help them in their services.

(2.) The covenant-blessings which he hath secured to them and their's, *ver. 3, 4.* (1.) They that are sensible of their spiritual wants and the insufficiency of the creature to supply them, shall have abundant satisfaction in God: *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty;* that thirst after righteousness, he shall be filled. Water shall be poured out to those who truly desire spiritual blessings above all the delights of sense. (2.) They that are barren as the dry ground, shall be watered with the grace of God, with floods of that grace, and God will himself give the increase. If the ground be never so dry, God has floods of grace to water it. (3.) The water God will pour out is his Spirit, *John vii. 39.* which God will pour out without measure upon the seed, that is, Christ, *Gal. iii. 16.* and my measure upon all the seed of the faithful, upon all the praying, wrestling seed of Jacob, *Luke xi. 13.* This is the great New Testament promise, that God having sent his servant Christ and upheld him, will send his Spirit to uphold us. (4.) This gift of the Holy Ghost is the great blessing God had reserved the plentiful effusion of for the latter days: *I will pour my Spirit;* i. e. my blessing; for where God gives his Spirit, he will give all other blessings. (5.) This is reserved for the seed and offspring of the church; for so the covenant of grace runs, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed.* And to all who are thus made to partake of the privileges of adoption, God will give the Spirit of adoption. (6.) Hereby there shall be a great increase of the church; thus it shall be spread to distant places. Thus it shall be propagated and perpetuated to after-times; they shall spring up, and grow as fast as willows by the water-courses, and in every thing that is virtuous and praiseworthy shall be eminent, and excel all about them, as the willows over-top the grass among which they grow, *ver. 4.* Note, It is a great happiness to the church, and a great pleasure to good men, to see the rising generation hopeful and promising: And it will be so if God pour his Spirit upon them, that blessing, that blessing of blessings.

(3.) The consent they cheerfully give to their part of the covenant, *ver. 5.* When the Jews returned out of captivity, they renewed their covenant with God, *Jer. i. 5.* particularly that they would have no more to do with idols, *Hosea xiv. 2, 3—8.* Backsliders must thus repent, and do their first works: many of those that were without, did at that time join themselves to them, invited by that glorious appearance of God for them, *Zech. viii. 23.* *Ejther viii. 17.* and they say, *We are the Lord's and call ourselves by the name of Jacob;* for there was one law, one covenant for the stranger, and for those that were born in the land. And doubtless it looks farther yet, to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the multitudes of them which, upon the effusion of the Spirit after Christ's ascension, should be joined to the Lord, and added to the church. The converts are one and another, very many of different ranks and nations, and all welcome to God, *Col. iii. 11.* When

one doth it, another shall by his example be invited to do it, and then another; thus the zeal of one may provoke many. (1.) They shall resign themselves to God: not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, I am the Lord's; he has an incontestible right to rule me, and I submit to him, to all his commands, to all his disposals: I am and will be his only, his wholly, his for ever; will be for his interests, will be for his praise; living and dying I will be his. (2.) They shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, *call themselves by the name of Jacob*, forgetting their own people and their father's house, and desirous to wear the character and livery of God's family. They shall love all God's people, shall associate with them, give them the right-hand of fellowship, espouse their cause, seek the good of the church in general, and of all the particular members of it, and be willing to take their lot with them in all conditions. (3.) They shall do this very solemnly; some of them shall subscribe with their hand unto the Lord, as for the confirming of a bargain a man sets his hand to it, and delivers it as his act and deed. The more express we are in our covenanting with God, the better; *Exod. xxiv. 7. Josh. xxiv. 26. 27. Neh. ix. 32.* Fast bind, fast find.

2. That as the Israel of God are a happy people, so the God of Israel is a great God, and he is God alone: and this also, as the former, speaks abundant satisfaction to all that trust him, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* Observe here, to God's glory and our comfort,

1. That the God we trust in is a God of incontestible sovereignty and irresistible power: he is the Lord Jehovah, self-existent and self-sufficient; and he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, of angels and men.

2. That he stands in relation to, and hath a particular concern for his church: he is the King of Israel and his Redeemer; therefore his Redeemer because his King; and those that take God for their king, shall have him for their Redeemer. When God would assert himself God alone, he proclaims himself Israel's God, that his people may be encouraged both to adhere to him and to triumph in him.

3. That he is eternal; the first and the last; *i. e.* He is God from everlasting before the worlds were, and will be so to everlasting; when the world shall be no more. If there were not a God to create, nothing had ever been; and if there were not a God to uphold, all would soon come to nothing again: he is all in all; is the first cause, from whom are all things; and the last end, to and for whom are all things, *Rom. xi. 36. The Alpha and the Omega, Rev. i. 1.*

4. That he is God alone, *ver. 6. Besides me there is no God: and ver. 1. Is there a God besides me?* We will appeal to the greatest scholars; did they ever in all their reading meet with any other? to those that have had the largest acquaintance with the world: did they ever meet with any other? there are *gods many*. *1 Cor. viii. 5, 6. called gods*, and counterfeit gods: but is there any besides our God that is infinite and eternal? any besides him that is the creator of the world, and the protector and benefactor of the whole creation? any besides him that can do that for their worshippers which he had and will do for his? ye are my witnesses; I have been a non-such to you: You have tried other gods, have you found any of them all-sufficient to you, or any of them like me? yea, there is no god; no rock, so the word is; none but he that can be a rock for a foundation to build on, a rock for shelter to flee to. God is the rock, and *their rock is not as our's*, *Deut. xxxii. 4, 31.* I know not any: *q. d.* I never met with any that offered to stand in competition with me, or that durst bring their pretensions to a fair trial; If I did know of any that could befriend you better than I can, I would recommend you to them: but I know not any. There is no God besides Jehovah; he is infinite, and therefore there can be no other; he is all sufficient, and therefore there needs no other. This is designed for the confirming of the hopes of God's people in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, and in order to that for the curing them of their idolatry; when the affliction had done its work, it should be removed. They are minded of the first and great article of their creed, that *the Lord their God is one Lord*, *Deut. vi. 4.* And therefore, (1.) They needed not to hope in any other god; those on whom the sun shines, need neither moon nor stars, nor the light of their own fire. (2.) They needed not to fear any other god; their own God was more able to do them good, than all the false and counterfeit gods of their enemies were to do them hurt.

5. That none but he could foretel these things to come, which God now by his prophet gave notice of to the world, above two hundred years before they came to pass, *ver. 7. Who, as I, shall call*, shall call Cyrus to Babylon, shall call Israel out of Babylon? is there any but God that can call effectually, and has every creature, every heart at his beck? who shall declare it, how it shall be, and by whom, as I do? nay, God goes farther, he not only sees it in order, as having the fore-knowledge of it, but sets it in order, as having the sole management and direction of it. Can any other pretend to this; he hath always set things in order according to the counsel of his own will, ever since he appointed the ancient people, *i. e.* the people of Israel, who could give a truer and fuller account of the antiquities of their own nation than any kingdom in the world could. Ever since he appointed that people to be his peculiar people, his providence was particularly conversant about them, and he told them before the events that should be concerning them, their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance out, their settlement in Canaan, &c. All was set in order in the divine predictions, as well as in the divine purposes. Could any other have done so? would any other have been so far concerned for them; he challengeth the pretenders to shew the things that should come hereafter; let them if they can, tell us the name of the man that shall destroy Babylon and deliver Israel? nay, if they cannot pretend to tell us the things that shall come hereafter, let them tell us the things that are coming, that are nigh at hand and at the door; let them tell us what shall come to pass to-morrow; but they cannot do that; fear them not therefore, nor be afraid of them; what harm can they do you? what hindrance can they give to your deliverance, when I have told thee it shall be accomplished in its seasons, and I have solemnly declared it? Note, Those who have the word of God's promise to depend upon, need not to be afraid of any adverse powers or politics whatsoever.

9. ¶ They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. 10. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? 11. Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. 12. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength fail-

eth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. 13. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. 14. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. 15. Then shall it be for man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast and his satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me for thou art my god. 18. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say I have burned part of it in the fire; yea also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20. He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Often before God by the prophet had mentioned the folly and strange foolishness of idolaters; but here he enlargeth upon that head, and very fully and particularly exposeth it to contempt and ridicule: and this discourse is intended, (1.) To arm the people of Israel against the strong temptation they would be in to worship idols when they were captives in Babylon, in compliance with the custom of the country, they being far from the city of their own solemnities, and to humour those who were now their lords and masters. (2.) To cure them of their inclination to idolatry, which was the sin that did most easily beset them, and to reform them from which they were sent into Babylon. As the rod or God is of use to enforce the word, so the word of God is of use to explain the rod, that the voice of both together may be heard and answered. (3.) To furnish them with something to say to their Chaldean task-masters, when they insulted over them; when they asked, Where is your God? they might from thence ask them, What are your gods? (4.) To take off their fear of the gods of their enemies, and to encourage their hope in their own God, that he would certainly appear against those who set up such scandalous competitors as these with him for the throne.

Now here for the conviction of idolaters we have,

1. A challenge given to them to clear themselves, if they can, from the imputation of the most shameful folly and senselessness imaginable, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* They set their wits on work to contrive, and their hands on work to frame graven images, and they call them *their delectable things*; extreme fond they are of them, and mighty things they expect from them. Note, Through the corruption of men's nature, those things that should be detestable to them are desirable and delectable; but those are far gone in a disemper to whom that which is the food and fuel of it is most agreeable. Now, (1.) We tell them that they that do so are all vanity, they deceive themselves and one another, and put a great cheat upon those for whom they make these images. (2.) We tell them that *their delectable things shall not profit them*, nor make them any return for the pleasure they take in them; they can neither supply them with good, nor protect them from evil. *The graven images are profitable for nothing at all*, nor will they ever get any thing by the devoirs they pay to them. (3.) We appeal to themselves whether it be not a silly, foolish thing to expect any good from gods of their own making; *they are their own witnesses*, witnesses against themselves, if they would but give their own consciences leave to deal faithfully with them, that they are blind and ignorant in doing thus, *they see not nor know*, and let them own it, that they may be ashamed. If men would but be true to their own convictions, ordinarily we might be sure of their conversion, particularly idolaters; for *who hath formed a god?* who but a mad-man, or one out of his wits, would think of forming a god? of making that which, if he make it a god, he must suppose to be his maker? (4.) We challenge them to plead their own cause with any confidence or assurance: he that has the front to say he hath formed a god, when all his fellows come together to declare what each of them has done towards the making of this god, they will all be ashamed of the cheat they have put upon themselves, and laugh in their sleeves at those whom they have imposed upon: for the workmen that formed this god they are of men, weak and impotent, and therefore cannot possibly make a being that shall be omnipotent, nor without blushing pretend to it; let them all be gathered together, as Demetrius and the craftsmen were, to support their sinking trade, let them stand up to plead their own cause and make the best they can of it, with hand joined in hand, yet they shall fear to undertake it when it comes to the setting to, as conscious to themselves of the weakness and badness of their cause; and they shall be ashamed of it, not only when they appear singly, but when by appearing together they hope to keep one another in countenance. Note, Idolatry and impiety are things which men may justly both tremble and blush to appear in the defence of.

2. A particular narrative of the whole proceeding in making a god, and there needs no more to expose it but to describe it, and tell the story of it.

1. The persons employed about it are handicraft tradesmen, the meanest of them, the very same that you would employ in making the common utensils of your husbandry, a cart or a plough: you must have a smith, a blacksmith, that with the tongs works in the coals, and it is hard work, for he works with the strength of his arms, till he is hungry and his strength fails, so eager is he; so hasty are those who set him on work to get it dispatched: He cannot allow himself time to eat or drink, for he drinks no water and therefore is faint, *ver. 12.* Perhaps it was a piece of superstition among them for the workman not to eat or drink while he was making a god. The plates with which the smith was to cover the image, or whatever iron-work was to be done about it, he fashioned it with hammers, and made it all very nice.

nice, according to the model given him: Then comes the carpenter, and he takes as much care and pains about the timber work, *ver. 13.* He brings his box of tools, for he hath occasion for them all, he stretcheth out his rule upon the piece of wood, marks it with a line where it must be sawed or cut off, he fits it or polisheth it with planes, the bigger first and then the lesser, he marks it out with a compass, which must be the size and shape of it; and it is just what he pleaseth.

2. The form in which it is made is that of a man, a poor weak, dying creature: but it is the noblest form and figure that he is acquainted with, and being his own he hath peculiar fondness for it, and his willing to put all the reputation he can upon it. He makes it according to the beauty of a man, in comely proportion, with those limbs and lineaments that are the beauty of a man, but are altogether unfit to represent the beauty of the Lord. God put a great honour upon man, when, in respect of the powers and faculties of his soul, he made him after the image of God; but man doth a great dishonour to God, when he makes him, in respect of bodily parts and members, after the image of man. Nor will it at all atone for the affront, so far to compliment his god, as to take the fairest of the children of men for his original from whence to take his copy, and to give him all the beauty of a man that he can think of; for all the beauty of the body of a man, when pretended to be put upon him who is an infinite Spirit, is a deformity and diminution to him. And when the goodly piece is finished, it must remain in the house, in the temple or shrine prepared for it, or perhaps in the dwelling house, if it be one of the household gods the *lares*, or *penates*.

3. The matter of which it is mostly made is even sorry stuff to make a god of: it is the stock of a tree.

(1.) The tree itself was fetched out of the forest where it grew among other trees, of no more virtue or value than its neighbours. It was a cedar it may be, or a cypress, or oak, *ver. 14.* perhaps he had an eye upon it sometime before for this use, and strengthened it for himself, used some art or other to make it stronger and better grown than other trees were. Or as some read it, which hath strengthened or lift up itself among the trees of the forest, the tallest and strongest he can pick out. Or it may be it likes his fancy better to take an ash, which is of a quicker growth, and which was of his own planting for this use, and which has been nourished with rain from heaven. See what a fallacy he puts upon himself in making that his refuge which was of his own planting, and which he not only gave the form to, but prepared the matter for. And what an affront he puts upon the God of heaven in setting up that as rival with him, which was nourished by his rain, that rain which falls upon the just and unjust.

(2.) The boughs of this tree were good for nothing but for fuel, to that use where they put, and so were the chips that were cut off from it in the working of it; they are for a man to burn, *ver. 15.* And to shew that that tree has no innate virtue in it for its own protection, it is as capable of being burnt as any other tree; and to shew that he who chose it had no more antecedent value for it than for any other tree, he makes no difficulty of throwing part of it into the fire as common rubbish, asking no question for conscience' sake. (1.) It serves him for his parlour fire; he will take thereof and warm himself, *ver. 15.* and he finds the comfort of it, and is so far from having any regret in his mind for it, that he saith, *Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire*; and certainly that part of the tree which served him for fuel, the use for which God and nature designed it, doth him a much greater kindness, and yields him more satisfaction than ever that will which he makes a god of. (2.) It serves him for his kitchen-fire; he eats flesh with it, that is, he dresseth the flesh with it which he is to eat, he roasteth roast, and is satisfied that he has not done amiss to put it to this use. Nay, (3.) It serves him to heat the oven with, in which we use that fuel which is of least value; he kindleth it and bakes bread with the heat of it, and none saith wrong he doth.

(3.) Yet after all the stock or body of the tree shall serve to make a god of, when it might as well have served to make a bench, as one of themselves; even a poet of their own, upbraids them, *Horat. Sat. i. 8.*

*Olim truncus eram, sicubus, inutile lignum,
Dum faber incertus, scammum faceretne, Priapum
Maluit esse deum, deus inde ego.*

And another of them threatens the idol to whom he had committed the custody of his woods, that if he did not preserve them to be fuel for his fire, he should himself be made use of for that purpose:

*Parasitæ mones manus repellas,
Et silvæ domini sociis reserves,
Si defecerit hæc, et ipse lignum es.*

MARTIAL.

When the beforesaid idolater hath thus served the meanest purposes with part of his tree, and the rest hath had time to season, he maketh that a god in his imagination, while that is in the doing, and worships it, he makes it a graven image, and falls down thereto, *ver. 15.* that is, *ver. 17.* The residue of the tree he makes a god, even his graven image, according to his fancy and intention; he falls down to it and worships it, gives divine honours to it, prostrates himself before it in the most humble, reverent posture, as a servant, as a suppliant; he prays unto it, as having a dependence upon it, and great expectations from it; he saith, *Deliver me, for thou art my god.* There where he pays his homage and allegiance, he justly looks for protection and deliverance. What a strange intimation is this, to expect help from gods that cannot help themselves! But it is this praying to them that makes them god, not what the smith or the carpenter did at them: What we place our confidence in for the deliverance, that we make a god of.

*Qui fingit factus, auro vel marmore, vultus
Non facit deus, qui rogat, ille facit.*

MARTIAL.

3. Here is judgment given upon this whole matter, *ver. 18, 19, 20.* In short, it is the effect and evidence of the greatest stupidity and fortitude that one could ever imagine rational beings to be guilty of, and shews that man is become worse than the beasts that perish; for they act according to the dictates of sense: but man acts not according to the dictates of reason, *ver. 18.* They have not known nor understood common sense; men that act rationally in other things, in this act most absurdly: Though they have some knowledge and understanding, yet they are strangers to, nay they are rebels against the great law of consideration, *ver. 19.* None considereth in his heart, nor hath so much application of mind as to reason thus with himself, which one would think he might easily do, though there were none to reason with him; I have burnt part of this tree in the fire, for baking and roasting; and now shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? i. e. an idol; for that is an abomination to God, and all wise and good men. Shall I ungratefully choose to do, or presumptuously dare to do what the Lord hates? Shall I be such a fool as to fall down to the stock of a tree? a senseless, lifeless, helpless thing? shall I so far disparage myself, and make myself

like that I bow down to? A growing tree may be a beautiful, stately thing, but the stock of a tree has lost its glory, and he has lost his that gives glory to it.

Upon the whole matter, the sad character given of these idolaters, *ver. 20.* is. (1.) That they put a cheat upon themselves; they feed on ashes; they feed themselves with hopes of advantage by worshipping these idols; but they will be disappointed as much as a man that would expect nourishment by feeding on ashes. Feeding on ashes is an evidence of a depraved appetite and a disordered body, and it is a sign the soul is overpowered by very ill habits, when men in their worships go no farther than the sight of their eyes will carry them. They are wretchedly deluded, and it is their own fault: a deceived heart of their own, more than the deceiving tongue of others, hath turned them aside from the faith and worship of the living God to dumb idols: They are drawn away of their own lusts, and enticed. The apostasy of sinners from God is owing purely to themselves, and to the evil heart of unbelief that is in their own bosom. A revolting and rebellious heart is a deceived heart. (2.) That they wilfully persist in their self-delusion, and will not be undeceived: There is none of them that can be persuaded so far to suspect himself as to say, *Is there not a lie in my right hand?* and so to think of delivering his soul. Now, 1. Idolaters have a lie in their right hand: for an idol is a lie, is not what it pretends, performs not what it promisseth, and it is a teacher of lies, *Hab. ii. 18.* 2. It highly concerns those that are secure in an evil way, seriously to consider whether there be not a lie in their right hand. Is not that a lie which with complacency we hold fast, as our chief good? Are our hearts set upon the wealth of the world, and the pleasure of sense? they will certainly prove a lie in our right hand. And is not that a lie which with confidence we hold fast by, as the ground on which we build our hopes for heaven? If we trust to our external professions and performances, as if those would save us, we deceive ourselves with a lie in our right hand, with a house built on the sand. 3. Self-suspicion is the first step towards self-deliverance: We cannot be faithful to ourselves unless we are jealous of ourselves. He that would deliver his soul, must begin with the putting of this question to his own conscience, *Is there not a lie in my right hand?* 4. Those that are given up to believe a lie, are under the power of strong delusions, which it is hard to get clear of, *2 Thess. ii. 11.*

21. ¶ Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. 22. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me: for I have redeemed thee. 23. Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. 24. Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretched forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself: 25. That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish. 26. That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: 27. That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: 28. That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

In these verses we have,

1. The duty which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, are called to, that they might be qualified and prepared for the deliverance designed them. Our first care must be to get good by our afflictions, and then we may hope to get out of them. The duty is expressed in two words, remember and return, as in the counsel of Ephesus, *Rev. ii. 4, 5.* (1.) Remember these, O Jacob, remember what thou hast been told of the folly of idolatry, and let the convictions thou art now under be ready to thee whenever thou art tempted to that sin: Remember that thou art my servant, and therefore must not serve other masters. (2.) Return unto me, *ver. 22.* It is the great concern of those who have backlidden from God, to hasten their return to him; and this is that which he calls them to when they are in affliction, and when he is returning to them in a way of mercy.

2. The favours which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, are assured of; and what is here promised to them upon their remembering and returning to God, is in a spiritual sense promised to all that in like manner return to God. It is a very comfortable word, for more is implied in it than is expressed, that, *ver. 21.* O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me, though for the present thou seem to be so. When we begin to remember God, he will begin to remember us, nay; it is he that remembers us first. Now observe here,

1. The grounds upon which God's favourable intentions to his people were built, and on which they might build their expectations from him. He will deliver them out of captivity; for, (1.) They are his servants, and therefore he hath a just quarrel with those that detain them; *Let my people go that they may serve me.* The servants of the King of kings are under special protection. (2.) He formed them into a people, formed them from the womb, *ver. 21.* From the first beginning of their increase into a nation, they were under his particular care and government, more than any other people; their national constitution was of his framing, and his covenant with them was the charter by which they were incorporated: They are his, and he will save them. (3.) He hath redeemed them formerly, has many a time redeemed them out of great distress, and he is still the same, in the same relation to them, hath the same concern for them: Therefore return unto me, for I have redeemed thee, *ver. 22.* Whither wilt thou go, but to me? Having redeemed them, as well as formed them, he hath acquired a farther title to them and propriety in them, which is a good reason why they should dutifully return to him, and why he will graciously return to them. The Lord hath redeemed Jacob, i. e. he is about to do it, *ver. 23.*

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he hath determined to do it; for he is the Lord their redeemer, *ver.* 24. Note, The work of redemption which God hath by his Son wrought for us, encourageth us to hope for all promised blessing from him: He that hath redeemed us at so vast an expence, will not lose his purchase. (4.) He hath glorified himself in them, *ver.* 23. and therefore will do so still, *John* xii. 28. It is matter of comfort to us to see God's glory interesting in the deliverances of the church; for therefore he will certainly redeem Jacob, because thus he will glorify himself. And this assures us that he will perfect the redemption of his saints by Jesus Christ, because there is a day set when he will be glorified and admired in them all. (5.) He hath pardoned their sins, which were the cause of their calamity, and the only obstruction to their deliverance, *ver.* 22. Therefore he will break the yoke of captivity from off their necks, because he hath blotted out, as a thick cloud, their transgressions. Note, 1. Our transgressions and our sins are as a cloud, a thick cloud; they interpose between heaven and earth, and for a time suspend and intercept the correspondence between the upper and lower world: sin separates between us and God, *Isa.* lix. 1. they threaten a storm, a deluge of wrath, as thick clouds do, which God will rain upon sinners, *Psal.* xi. 6. 2. When God pardons sin, he blots out this cloud, this thick cloud; so that the intercourse with heaven is laid open again: God looks down upon the soul with favour, the soul looks up to him with pleasure. The cloud is scattered by the influence of the Sun of righteousness: It is only through Christ that sin is pardoned. When sin is pardoned like a cloud that is scattered, it appears no more, it is quite gone; the iniquity of Jacob shall be sought for and not found, *Jer.* i. 20. And the comforts that flow into the soul when sin is pardoned, are like clear shining after clouds and rain.

2. The universal joy which the deliverance of God's people should bring along with it, *ver.* 23. Sing, O ye heavens. This intimates, (1.) That the whole creation shall have cause for joy and rejoicing in the redemption of God's people; to that is owing, both that it subsists, that it is rescued from the curse which the sin of man brought upon the ground; and that it is again put into a capacity of answering the ends of its being, and is assured, that though now it groans, being burdened, it shall at last be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The greatest establishment of the world is the kingdom of God in it, *Psal.* cxvii. 11.—13.—cxviii. 7—9. (2.) That the angels shall rejoice in it, and the inhabitants of the upper world: The heavens shall sing, for the Lord has done it: and there is a joy in heaven when God and man are reconciled, *Luke* xv. 7. Joy when Babylon falls, *Rev.* xviii. 20. (3.) That those who lay at the greatest distance, even the inhabitants of the Gentile world, should join in these praises, as sharing in these joys. The lower parts of the earth, the forest and the trees there, shall bring in the tribute of thanksgiving for the redemption of Israel.

3. The encouragement we have to hope, that though great difficulties, and such as have been thought insuperable, lie in the way of the church's deliverance, yet when the time for it is come, they shall all be got over with ease; for thus saith Israel's redeemer, I am the Lord that maketh all things, did make them at first, and am still making them; for providence is a continued creation; all being, power, life, motion, and perfection, are from him: He stretched forth the heavens alone, hath no help, nor needs any, and the earth too he spreads abroad by himself, and by his own power: Man was not by him when he did it, *Job.* xxxviii. 4. nor did any creature advise or assist; only his own eternal wisdom and word was by him then as one brought up with him, *Prov.* viii. 30. His stretching out the heavens by himself speaks the boundless extent of his power. The strongest man, if he be to stretch a thing out, must get some body or other to lend a hand: but God stretched out the vast expanse, and keeps still upon the stretch himself by his own power. Let not Israel be discouraged then, nothing is too hard for him to do that made the world, *Psal.* cxxiv. 8. And having made all, he can make what use he pleaseth of all, and has it in his power to serve his own purpose by them.

4. The confusion which this would put upon the oracles of Babylon, by the confusion it would give them, *ver.* 25. God, by delivering his people out of Babylon, would frustrate the tokens of the liars, of all the lying prophets, that said the Babylonian monarchy had many ages yet to live, and pretended to ground their predictions upon some token, some sign or other, which according to the rules of their art foreboded its prosperity; how will these conjurers grow mad with vexation, when they see their skill fails them, and that the contrary happens to that which they so coveted, and were so confident of: Nor would it only baffle their pretended prophets, but their celebrated politicians too, he turns the wise men backward, finding they cannot go on with their projects, they are forced to quit them, and so he makes the judges fools, and makes their knowledge foolish. Those that are brought acquainted with Christ, see all the knowledge they had before to be foolishness in comparison with the knowledge of him: And those that are adversaries to him, will find all their counsels, like Abithophel's, turned into foolishness, and themselves taken in their own craftiness, *1 Cor.* iii. 19.

5. The confirmation which this would give to the oracles of God, which the Jews had disturbed: and their enemies despised; God confirmeth the word of his servant, *ver.* 26. he confirms it by accomplishing it in its season, and performeth the counsel of the messengers, he hath many a time sent to his people, to tell them what great blessings he had in store for them. Note, The exact fulfilling of the prophecies of scripture, is a confirmation of the truth of the whole book, and an incontestible evidence of its divine original and authority.

6. The particular favours God designed for his people, that were now in captivity, *ver.* 26, 27, 28. And these were foretold long before they went into captivity, that they might see reason to expect a correction, but no reason to fear a final destruction.

1. It is here supposed that Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, shall for a time lie in ruins, despoiled and uninhabited; but it is promised that they shall be rebuilt and repeopled. When Isaiah lived, Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were full of inhabitants; but they will be emptied, burnt, and destroyed; it was then hard to believe that concerning such strong and populous cities: But the justice of God will do that: and when that is done, it will be hard to believe that ever they will recover themselves again, and yet the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do that too. God hath said to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; for while the world stands God will have a church in it; and therefore he will raise up those who shall say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built: for if it be not built it cannot be inhabited, *Psal.* lxxix. 35, 36. When God's time is come for the building up of his church, let him alone to find both houses for his people, for they shall not lie exposed, and people for his houses, for they shall not stand empty. The cities of Judah too shall again be built: The Assyrian army under Sennacherib only took them, and then upon the defeat of that army they returned undamaged to the right owners; but the Chaldean army demolished them, and by carrying away the inhabitants let them go to decay of themselves; for if lesser judgments prevail not to humble and reform men, God will send greater; yet these desolations shall not be perpetual, God will raise up the wastes and decayed places thereof; for he will not contend for ever! The city of strangers when it is ruined, shall never be built, *chap.* xxvi. 2. But the city of God's own children is but discontinued for a time.

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2. It is here supposed that the temple too shall be destroyed, and lie for a time rased to the foundations; but it is promised, that the foundation of it shall again be laid, and no doubt built upon. As the desolation of the sanctuary was to all the pious Jews the most mournful part of the destruction, so the restoration and re-establishment of it would be the most joyful part of the deliverance: What joy can they have in the re-building of Jerusalem, if the temple there be not rebuilt; for that is it that makes it a holy city, and truly beautiful. This therefore was the chief thing that the Jews had at heart, and had in view in their return: therefore they would go back to Jerusalem, to build the house of the Lord God of Israel there, *Ezra* i. 3.

3. It is here supposed that very great difficulties would lie in the way of this deliverance, which it would be impossible for them to wade through; but it is promised that by a divine power they should all be removed, *ver.* 27. God saith to the deep, Be dry; so he did when he brought Israel out of Egypt; and so he will again when he brings them out of Babylon, if there be occasion; Who art thou, O great mountain; dost thou stand in the way? Before Zerubbabel, the commander in chief of the returning captives, thou shalt become a plain, *Zech.* iv. 7. Who art thou, O great deep? Dost thou retard their passage, and think to block it up? thou shalt be dry, and the rivers that supply thee shall be dried up. When Cyrus took Babylon by draining the river Euphrates into many channels, and so making it passable for his army, this was fulfilled. Note, Whatever obstructions lie in the way of Israel's redemption, God can remove them with a word's speaking.

4. It is here supposed that none of the Jews themselves would be able by might and power to force their way out of Babylon; but it is promised that God will raise up a stranger from afar off that shall fairly open the way for them, and now at length he names the very man, scores of years before he was born or thought of, *ver.* 28. That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd. Israel is his people, and the sheep of his pasture; these sheep are now in the midst of wolves in the hands of the thief and robber; they are impounded for trespass: Now Cyrus shall be his shepherd, employed by him to release these sheep, and to take care of their return to their own green pastures again. And in this he shall perform all my pleasure, shall bring about what is purposed by me, and will be highly pleasing to me. Note, 1. The most contingent things are certain to the divine providence: he knew who was the person, and what was his name, that should be the deliverer of his people, and when he pleased could let his church know it, that when they heard of such a name beginning to be talked of in the world, they might lift up their head, with joy, knowing that their redemption was at hand. 2. It is the greatest honour of the greatest man to be employed for God to his infirmities of his favour to his people. It was more the praise of Cyrus to be God's shepherd, than to be emperor of Persia. 3. God makes what use he pleaseth of men, of mighty men, of those that are set with the greatest freedom, and when they think to do as they please, he can ever rule them, and make them do as he pleaseth. Nay, in those very things wherein they are serving themselves, and look no farther than that, God is serving his own purpose by them, and making them to perform all his pleasure. All princes shall do what poor prophets have foretold.

C H A P. XLV.

Cyrus was nominated in the foregoing chapter to be God's shepherd, more is said to him, and more of him in this chapter, not only because he was to be instrumental in the release of the Jews out of their captivity, but because he was to be therein a type of the great Redeemer, and that release typical of the great redemption from sin and death; for that was the salvation of which all the prophets witnessed. We have here, (1.) The great things which God would do for Cyrus, that he might be put into a capacity to discharge God's people, *ver.* 8—11. (2.) The proof God would hereby give of his eternal power and godhead, and his universal, incontestible sovereignty, *ver.* 3—7. (3.) A prayer for the hastening of this deliverance, *ver.* 9. (4.) A check to the unbelieving Jews who quarrelled with God for the lengthening out of their captivity. (5.) Encouragement given to the believing Jews who trusted in God, and continued instant in prayer, assuring them that God would, in due time, accomplish this work by the hand of Cyrus, *ver.* 11—15. (6.) A challenge given to the worshippers of idols, and their doom read and satisfaction given to the worshippers of the true God, and their comfort secured, with an eye to the Mediator, who is made of God to us both for righteousness and sanctification, *ver.* 16—25. And here, as in other parts of this prophecy, there is much of Christ, and gospel grace.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; 2. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: 3. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and the hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. 4. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

Cyrus was a Mede, descended (as some say) from Assyges, king of Media; the pagan writers are not agreed in their accounts of his original; some tell us that in his infancy he was an outcast, left exposed, and was saved from perishing by an herdsmen's wife: However, it is agreed, that being a man of an active genius, he soon made himself very considerable; especially, when Cræsus, king of Lydia, made a descent upon his country, which he not only repulsed, but revenged, presenting the advantages he had gained against Cræsus with such vigour, that in a little time he took Sardis, made himself master of the rich kingdom of Lydia, and the many provinces that then belonged to it. This made him very great (for Cræsus was rich to a proverb) and enabled him to pursue his victories in many countries; but it was near ten years after that in conjunction with his uncle Darius, and with the forces of Persia, that he made this famous attack upon Babylon which is here foretold, and which we have the history of, *Dan.* v. Babylon was now grown exorbitantly rich and strong; it was forty-five miles in compass, some say more: the wall thirty-two feet thick, and an hundred cubits high; some say, they were so thick, that six chariots might drive abreast upon them; some say, they were fifty cubits thick, and two hundred high. Cyrus seems to have had a great ambition to make himself

master of this place, and to have projected it long, and at last he performed it.

Now here two hundred and ten years before it came to pass, we are told,

1. What great things God would do for him, that he might put it into his power to release his people; in order to this, he shall be a mighty conqueror, and a wealthy monarch, and nations shall become tributaries to him, and help him both with men and money. Now that which God here promised to do for Cyrus, he could have done for Z-rubbabai, or some of the Jews themselves; but the wealth and power of this world, God has seldom seen fit to intrust his own people with much of, so many are the snares and temptations that attend it; but if there has been occasion for the good of the church to make use of it, God has been pleased rather to put it into the hands of others to be employed for them, than to venture it in their own hands.

Cyrus is here called God's anointed, because he was both designed and qualified for this great service, by the counsel of God, and was to be herein a type of the Messiah. God engaged to hold his right hand, not only to direct and sustain him, but to direct his motions and intentions, as Elihu put his hands upon the king's hands, when he was to shoot his arrow against Syria, 2 Kings xiii. 16. Being under such a conduct,

1. He shall extend his conquests very far; and shall make nothing of the opposition that will be given him. Babylon is too strong a place for a young hero to begin with, and therefore that he may be able to deal with that great addition shall be made to his strength by other conquests. (1.) *Potential kingdoms shall yield to him; God will subdue nations before him; when he is in the full career of his successes he shall make nothing of a nation's being born to him at once; yet it is not he that subdues them, it is God that subdues them for him; the battle is his, and therefore his is the victory.* (2.) *Potent kings shall fall before him; I will loose the loins of kings, either the girdle of their loins, divest them of their power and dignity, or the strength of their loins, and then it was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for when he was struck into a panic fear, by the hand-writing on the wall, the joints of his loins were loosed, Dan. v. 6.* (3.) *Great cities shall surrender themselves into his hands, without giving him or themselves any trouble; God will incline the keepers of the city to open before him the two-leaved gates, not treacherously, or timorously, but from a full conviction that it is no purpose to contend with him; and therefore the gates shall not be shut to keep him out as an enemy, but thrown open to admit him as a friend.* (4.) *The longest and most dangerous marches shall be made easily and ready as a stream. I will go before thee, to clear the way, and to conduct thee in it, and the crooked places shall be made straight; or, as some read it, the high places shall be levelled and made even. Those will find a ready road that have God going before them.* (5.) *No opposition shall stand before him: he that gives him his commission, will break in pieces the gates of brass that are set against him, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, wherewith they are fastened.* This was fulfilled in the letter, if it be true which Herodotus reports, that the city of Babylon had a hundred gates all of brass, with post and hooks of the same metal.

2. He shall replenish his coffers very much, *ver. 3. I will give thee the treasures of darkness; treasures of gold and silver, that have been long kept close under lock and key, and had not seen the light of many years; or had been buried under ground by the inhabitants, in the fright, upon the taking of the city. The riches of many nations had been brought to Babylon, and Cyrus seized all together; The hidden riches of secret places, which belonged either to the crown or to private persons, shall all be a prey to Cyrus. Thus God designing him to do a piece of service to his church, paid him richly for it beforehand; and Cyrus very honestly owned God's goodness to him, and in consideration of that released the captives, Ezra i. 2. God has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and thereby has obliged me to build him a house in Jerusalem.*

2. We are here told what God designed in doing all this for Cyrus. What Cyrus aimed at in undertaking his wars, we may easily guess; but what God aimed at in giving him such wonderful success in his wars, we are here told:

1. It was that the God of Israel might be glorified; that thou mayest know by all this that I the Lord am the God of Israel; for I have called thee by thy name, long before thou wast born. When Cyrus had this prophecy of Isaiah shewed him, and there found his own name, and his own achievement particularly described so long before, he shall thereby be brought to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the Lord Jehovah, the only living and true God, and continues to own his Israel, though now in captivity. It is well when men's prosperity and success brings them to the knowledge of God, for too often it makes them forget him.

2. It was that the Israel of God might be released, *ver. 4.* Cyrus has not known God, as the God of Israel, having been trained up in the worship of idols, the true God was to him an unknown God, but though he knew not God, God not only knew him when he came into being, but fore-knew him, and bespoke him for his shepherd; he called him by his name, Cyrus, nay, which was yet a greater honour, he surnamed him, and called him his anointed. And why did God do all this for Cyrus? not for his own sake, be it known to him; whether he was a man of virtue or no, is questioned; Xenophon indeed when he would describe the heroic virtues of an excellent prince, made use of Cyrus's name, and many of the particulars of his story, in his Cyropaedia; but other historians represent him as haughty, cruel, and blood-thirsty; the reason therefore why God premised it was for Jacob his servant's sake. Note 1. In all the revolutions of this world, the sudden falls of the great and strong, and the surprising advancements of the weak and obscure, God is designing the good of his church. 2. It is therefore the wisdom of those to whom God has given wealth and power, to use it for his glory, by being kind with it to his people. Cyrus is preferred that Israel may be released; he shall have a kingdom only that God's people may have their liberty, for their kingdom is not of this world; that is yet to come. In all this Cyrus was a type of Christ, who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and intrusted with unsearchable riches, for the use and benefit of God's servants, his elect: when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, took those captives that had taken others captives, and opened the prison to those that were bound.

5. *I am the LORD, and there is none else. there is no God besides me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: 6. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. 7. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. 8. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the*

skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together: I the LORD have created it. 9. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potterd strive with the potterherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it. What maketh thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? 10. Woe unto him that faith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

God here asserts his sole and sovereign dominion, as that which he designed to prove and manifest to the world, in all the great things he did for Cyrus, and by him.

Observe, 1. How this doctrine is here laid down, concerning the sovereignty of the great Jehovah, in two things:

(1.) That he is God alone, and there is no God besides him; this is here inculcated as a fundamental truth, which if it were firmly believed, would abolish idolatry out of the world. With what an awful, commanding air of majesty, and authority, bidding defiance, as it were, to all pretenders, doth the great God here proclaim it to the world; *I am the Lord, I the Lord Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God besides me; no self-existent, self-sufficient being, none infinite and eternal but I; and again, ver. 6. There is none besides me, all that are set up in competition with me are counterfeits, they are all vanity, and a lie, for I am the Lord, and there is none else.* This is here said to Cyrus, not only to cure him of the sin of his ancestors, which was worshipping idols, but to prevent his falling into the sin of some of his predecessors in victory and universal monarchy, which was setting up themselves for gods and being idolized; to which some attribute much of the origin of idolatry. Let Cyrus, when he is become thus rich and great, remember that still he is but a man, and there is no God but one.

(2.) That he is Lord of all, and there is nothing done without him *ver. 7. I form the light, which is grateful and pleasing; and I create darkness, which is grievous and unpleasing; I make peace, put here for all good, and I create evil, not the evil of sin, God is not the author of that, but the evil of punishment; I the Lord order, and direct, and do all these things.* Observe, (1.) The very different events that are concerning the children of men; light and darkness, opposite to each other, and yet in the course of providence sometimes intermixed, like the morning and evening twilights, *neither day nor night, Zech. xiv. 16.* a mixture of joys and sorrows in the same cup, allays to each other: sometimes they are counterchanged, as noon-day light and midnight darkness, in the revolution of every day each takes its turn, and there are short transitions from the one to the other; witness Job's case. (2.) The self-same cause of both, and that is he that is the first cause of all; I the Lord, the fountain of all being, and the fountain of all power: he that formed the natural light, *Gen. i. 3.* still forms the providential light; that at first made peace among the jarring seeds and principles of nature, makes peace in the affairs of men: he that allowed the natural darkness, which was a mere privation, creates the providential darkness, for concerning troubles and afflictions he gives positive orders. Not, the wise God has the ordering and disposing of all our comforts and all our crosses in this world.

2. How this doctrine is here proved and published:

(1.) It is proved by that which God did for Cyrus; *there is no God besides me, for, ver. 5. I girded thee though thou hast not known me;* it was not thine own idol, which thou didst know and worship, that girded thee for this expedition, that gave thee authority and ability for it: No, It was I that girded thee, I whom thou didst not know nor seek to. By this it appears that the God of Israel is the only true God, that he manageth and maketh, what use he pleaseth, even of those that are strangers to him and pay their homage to other gods.

(2.) It is published to all the world, both by the word of God and by his providence, and by the testimony of the suffering Jews in Babylon, that all may know from the east and from the west, sun-rise and sun-set, that the Lord is God, and there is none else. The wonderful deliverance of the Israel of God proclaimed to all the world, that *there is none like unto the God of Jefturun, that rides on the heavens for their help.*

3. How this doctrine is here improved and applied:

1. For the comfort of those that earnestly longed, and yet quietly waited for the redemption of Israel, *ver. 8. Drop down, ye heavens, from above.* Some take this as the saints' prayer for the deliverance, I rather take it as God's precept concerning it, for he is said to *command deliverances, Psal. xlv. 4.* Now the precept is directed to heaven and earth, and all the hosts of both, as royal precepts commonly run, *To all officers, evil and military:* all the creatures shall be made in their places to contribute to the carrying on this great work, when God will have it done. If men will not be aiding and assisting, God will produce it without them, as he doth the dews of heaven, and the grass of the earth, which *carry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men, Micah v. 7.* Observe, (1.) The method of this great deliverance that is to be wrought for Israel; righteousness must first be wrought in them, *i. e.* they must be brought to repent of their sins, to renounce their idolatries, to return to God, and reform their lives; and then the salvation shall be wrought for them, and not till then. We must not expect salvation without righteousness, they spring up together, and together the Lord hath created them; what he has joined together, let not us therefore put asunder. See *Psal. lxxxv. 9, 10, 11.* Christ died to save us from our sins, not in our sins, and is made redemption to us by being made to us righteousness and satisfaction. (2.) The means of this great deliverance; rather than it shall fail, when the set time for it is come, the heavens shall drop down righteousness, and the earth shall open to bring forth salvation, and both concur to the reformation, and so to the restoration of God's Israel. It is from heaven, from above the skies that righteousness drops down, for every grace and good gift is from above, nay, since the more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, it is now poured down, and if our hearts be opened to receive it, the product will be the fruits of righteousness and the great salvation.

2. For reproof to those of the church's enemies that opposed this salvation, or those of her friends that despaired of it, *ver. 9. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker.* God is the maker of all things and therefore our maker, which is a reason why we should always submit to him, and never contend with him. (1.) Let not the proud oppressors, in the elevation of their spirits, oppose God's designs concerning the deliverance of his people, nor think to detain them any longer, when the time is come for their release. Woe to the insulting Babylonians that set God at defiance, as Pharaoh did, and will not let his people go. (2.) Let not the poor oppressed, in the dejection of their spirits, murmur and quarrel with God for the prolonging of their captivity, as if he dealt unjustly or unkindly with them, or think to force their way out before God's time is come. Note, Those will find themselves in a woeful condition that strive with their Maker;

Maker; for none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. Sinful man is indeed a quarrelsome creature; but let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth: men are but earthen pots, nay, they are broken potsherds; and are made so very much by their mutual contentions; they are dashed in pieces one against another; and if they are disposed to strive, let them strive with one another, let them meddle with their match; but let them not dare to contend with him that is infinitely above them, which is as senseless and absurd as, (1.) For the clay to find fault with the potter; *Shall the clay say to him that formed it, What makest thou? Why dost thou make me of this shape and not that? Nay, it is as if the clay should be in such a heat and passion with the potter as to tell him, he has no hands, or that he works as awkwardly as if he had none. Shall the clay pretend to be wiser than the potter, and therefore to advise him? or mightier than the potter, and therefore to controul him? He that gave us being, that gave us this being, may design concerning us and dispose of us as he pleaseth; and it is impudent presumption for us to prescribe to him: Shall we impeach God's wisdom, or question his power, who are ourselves so curiously, so wonderfully made? Or say, He has no hands, whose hands made us, and in whose hands we are? The doctrine of God's sovereignty, has enough in it to silence all our discontents and objections against the methods of his providence and grace, Rom. ix. 20, 21. (2.) It is as unnatural as for the child to find fault with the parents; to say to the father, What begettest thou? or to the mother, What hast thou brought forth? Why was I not begotten and born an angel, exempt from the infirmities of human nature, and the calamities of human life? Must not those who are children of men expect to share in the common lot, and to fare as others fare? If God is our father, where is the honour we owe to him by submitting to his will?*

11. Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. 12. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded. 13. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts. 14. Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabceans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God. 15. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel the Saviour. 16. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. 17. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. 18. For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD, and there is none else. 19. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

The people of God in captivity, that reconciled themselves to the will of God in their afflictions and were content to wait his time for their deliverance, are here assured that they should not wait in vain.

1. They are invited to inquire concerning the issue of their troubles, ver. 11. *The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker*; though he doth not allow them to strive with him, yet encourageth them, (1.) To consult his word, *Ask of me things to come*; have recourse to the prophets and their prophecies, and see what they say concerning these things. Ask the watchmen, What of the night? Ask them, How long? Things to come, as far as they are revealed, belong to us and to our children, and we must not be strangers to them. (2.) To seek unto him by prayer; *concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands*; that, as becomes them, submit to the will of their father, the will of their potter, command ye me; not by way of prescription, but by way of petition. Be earnest in your requests, and confident in your expectations, as far as both are guided by, and grounded upon the promise. We may not strive with our Maker by passionate complaints, but we may wrestle with him by faithful and fervent prayer; *My sons, and the work of my hands*, commend ye to me; so some read it; bring them to me, and leave them with me. See the power of prayer, and its prevalency with God; *Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am; what wouldst thou that I should do unto you?* Some read it with an interrogation, as carrying on the reproof, ver. 9, 10. *Do ye question me concerning things to come?* and I am bound to give you an account? And concerning my children, even concerning the work of my hands, will you command me? or prescribe to me? dare you do so? *Shall any teach God knowledge, or give law to him?* Those that complain of God, do in effect assume an authority over him.

2. They are encouraged to depend upon the power of God, when they were brought very low, and were utterly incapable of helping themselves, ver. 12. *Their help stands in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth*; which he mentions here not only for his own glory, but for their comfort. The heavens and earth shall contribute if he pleaseth to the deliverance of the church, ver. 8. For he created both, and therefore hath both at command. (1.) He made the earth and created man upon it, for it was intended to be a habitation for man, Psal. cxv. 16. He hath therefore not only authority, but wisdom and power sufficient to govern man here on this earth, and to make what use he pleaseth of him. (2.) *His hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts he commanded into being at first, and therefore still governs all their motions and influences.* It is good news to God's Israel that their God is the creator and governor of the world.

3. They are particularly told what God would do for them, that they might know what to depend upon; and this shall lead them to expect a more glorious redeemer and redemption, of whom and of which Cyrus, and their deliverance by him, were types and figures.

(1.) Liberty shall be proclaimed to them, ver. 13. Cyrus is the man that shall do it; and in order hereunto God will put power into his hands; *I have raised him up in righteousness*; i. e. in pursuance and performance of my promises, and to plead my people's just but injured cause. He will give him success in all his enterprises, particularly that against Babylon; *I will direct all his ways*, and then it follows, he will prosper him; for those must needs speed well that are under a divine conduct: and whom God designs to employ for him, he will make their way plain. Two things Cyrus must do for God: (1.) Jerusalem is God's city, but it is now in ruins, and he must rebuild it, i. e. he must give orders for the rebuilding of it, and give wherewithal to do it. (2.) Israel is God's people, but they are now captives, and he must release them freely and generously; not demanding any ransom, or compounding with them for price or reward. And Christ is anointed to do that for the poor captivated souls which Cyrus was to do for the captive Jews, to proclaim the opening of the prison to them that were bound, Isa. lxi. 1.

1. Enlargement from a worse bondage than that in Babylon. (2.) Provision shall be made for them. They were out poor and unable to bear the expences of their return and re-establishment; and therefore it is promised, that the labour of Egypt and other nations should come over to them, and be their's, ver. 14. Cyrus having conquered these countries, out of their spoils provided for the returning Jews; and he ordered his subjects to furnish them with necessaries, Ezra i. 4. so that they did not go out empty from Babylon no more than from Egypt. Those that are redeemed by Christ shall be not only provided for but enriched. Those whose spirits God lifts up to go to the heavenly Zion, may depend upon him to bear their charges. The world is their's as far as is good for them.

(3.) Profelytes shall be brought over to them: *Men of stature shall come after thee in chains; they shall fall, fall down to thee saying, Surely God is in thee.* This was in part fulfilled when many of the people of the land became Jews, Eph. viii. 17. and said, *We will go with you*, humbly requesting leave to do so, for we have heard that God is with you, Zech. viii. 23. The restoration would be a means of the conviction of many and the conversion of some. Perhaps many of the Chaldeans who were now themselves conquered by Cyrus, when they saw the Jews going back in triumph, came and begged pardon for the affronts and abuses they had given them; owned that God was among them, and that he was God alone, and therefore desired to join themselves to them. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, when the Gentiles should become obedient by word and deed to the faith of Christ, Rom. xv. 18. as willing captives to the church, Psal. cx. 3. glad to wear her chains: when an infidel, beholding the public worship of Christians, shall own himself convinced that *God is with them of a truth*, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. and shall assay to join himself to them; and when those that had been of the Synagogue of Satan shall come and worship before the church's feet, and be made to know that *God has loved her*, Rev. iii. 9. and the kings of the earth and the nations shall bring their glory into the gospel-Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 24. Note, It is good to be with those, though it be in chains, that have God with them.

4. They are taught to trust God farther than they can see him. The prophet puts this word into their mouths, and goes before them in saying it, ver. 15. *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself.* (1.) God hid himself when he brought them into the trouble; *hid himself and was wroth*, Isa. lvii. 17. Note, Though God be his people's God and Saviour, yet sometimes when they provoke him, he hides himself from them in displeasure, suspends his favours, and lays them under his frowns: but let them wait upon the Lord that hides his face, Isa. lvii. 17. (2.) He hid himself when he was bringing them out of the trouble. Note, When God is acting as Israel's God and Saviour, commonly his ways are in the secret, Psal. lxxvii. 19. The salvation of the church is carried on in a mysterious way, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working on men's spirits, Zech. iv. 6 by weak and unlikely instruments, small and accidental occurrences, and was not wrought till the last extremity; but this is our comfort, though God hide himself we are sure he is the God of Israel, the Saviour, Job xxv. 14.

5. They are instructed to triumph over idolaters and all the worshippers of other gods, ver. 16. *They that are makers of idols*; not only that frame them, but that make gods of them by praying to them; *they shall be ashamed and confounded* when they shall be convinced of their mistakes, and shall be forced to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the only true God; and when they shall be disappointed in their expectations from their idols, under whose protection they had put themselves. They shall go to confusion when they shall find that they can neither excuse the sin nor escape the punishment of it, Psal. xevii. 7. It is not here and there one more timorous than the rest that shall thus speak and give up the cause, but all of them; y, though they appear in a body, though hand join in hand, and they do all they can to keep one another in countenance, yet they shall go to confusion together and bind them in bundles to burn them.

6. They are assured that those who trust in God shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, ver. 17. Now God was about to deliver them out of Babylon, he directed them by his prophet, (1.) To look up to him as the author of their salvation; *Israel shall be saved in the Lord.* Not only their salvation shall be wrought out by his power, but it shall be treasured up for them in his grace and promise, and so secured to them: they shall be saved in him, for his name shall be their strong tower, into which they shall run, and in which they shall be safe. (2.) To look beyond this temporal deliverance, to that which is spiritual and has reference to another world; to think of that salvation by the Messiah, which is an everlasting salvation, the salvation of the soul, a rescue from everlasting misery, and a restoration to everlasting bliss. Give diligence to make that sure, for it may be made sure, so sure that ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. Ye shall not only be delivered from that *everlasting shame and contempt*, which will be the portion of idolaters, Dan. xii. 2. but ye shall have everlasting honour and glory. There is a world without end; and it will be well or ill with us, according as it will be with us in that world. They that are saved with the everlasting salvation, shall never be ashamed of what they did or suffered in the hopes of it; for it will so far outdo their expectations as to be a more abundant reimbursement. The returning captives owned that to them did belong confusion of face, Dan. ix. 7, 8. yet God tells them, they shall not be confounded, but shall have assurance for ever. They that are confounded as penitents for their own sin, shall not be confounded, as believers in God's promise and power.

7. They are engaged for ever to cleave to God, and never to desert him, never to distrust him. What had been often inculcated before is here again repeated, for the encouragement of his people to continue faithful to him, and to hope that he would be so to them; *I am the Lord and there is none else.* That the Lord we serve and trust in is God alone, appears by the two great lights; that of nature, and that of revelation.

1. It appears by the light of nature; for he made the world, and therefore may justly demand its homage, ver. 18. *Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens and formed the earth, I am the Lord*; the sovereign Lord of all, and there is none else. The gods of the heathen did not do this, nay they did not pretend to do it. He here mentions the creation of the heavens, but enlargeth more upon that of the earth, because that is the part of the creation

creation which we have the nearest view of, and are most conversant with. It is here observed, (1.) That he formed it: it is not a rude and indigested chaos, but cast into the most proper shape and size by infinite wisdom. (2.) That he fixed it. When he made it, he established it, *founded it on the seas*, Psal. xxiv. 2. *hung it on nothing*, Job xxvii. 7. as at first he made it of nothing, and yet made it substantial and hung it fast; *Ponderibus librata fuit*. (3.) That he fitted it for use and for the service of man, to whom he designed to give it. He created it not in vain, merely to be a proof of his power; but he formed it to be inhabited by the children of men, and for that end he drew the waters off it with which it was at first covered, and made the *dry land appear*, Psal. civ. 6, 7. Be it observed here, to the honour of God's wisdom, that he made nothing in vain; but intended for some end and every way fitted to answer the intention. If any man prove to have been made in vain, it is his own fault; and to the honour of God's goodness and his favour to man, that he reckoned that not made in vain which serves for his use and benefit, to be a habitation and maintenance for him.

2. It appears by the light of revelation: as the works of God abundantly prove that he is God alone, so doth his word, and the discovery he hath made of himself and of his mind and will by it. His oracles far exceed those of the Pagan deities as well as his operations, *ver. 19*. The preference is here placed in three things. All that God hath said is plain, satisfactory, and just. (1.) In the manner of the delivery of it is plain and open; *I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth*. The Pagan deities delivered their oracles out of dens and caverns, with a low and hollow voice, and in ambiguous expressions; those that had familiar spirits whispered and muttered, *chap. viii. 19*. But God delivered his law from the top of mount Sinai before all the thousands of Israel, in distinct, audible, and intelligible sounds; *wisdom cries in the chief places of concourse*, Prov. i. 20, 21.—viii. 1, 2, 3. The vision is written and made plain, so that he that runs may read it; if it be obscure to any, they may thank themselves: Christ pleaded in his own defence what God saith here; *In secret have I said nothing*, John xviii. 20. (2.) In the use and benefit of it, it was highly satisfactory; *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, who consulted these oracles and governed themselves by them, Seek ye me in vain*, as the false gods did to their worshippers, who sought for the living to the dead, Isa. viii. 19. This includes all the gracious answers that God gave both to those that consulted him, his word is to them a faithful guide, and to those that prayed: to him; the seed of Jacob are a praying people, it is the generation of them that seek him, Psal. xxiv. 6. And as he has in his word invited them to seek him, so he never denied their believing prayers, nor disappointed their believing expectations. He said not to them, to any of them, *Seek ye me in vain*; for if he did not think fit to give them the particular thing they prayed for, yet he gave them that grace sufficient, and that comfort and satisfaction of soul which was equivalent. It is true of prayer what we say of winter, it never rots in the skies: God not only gives a gracious answer to, but will be the bountiful rewarder of those that diligently seek him. (3.) In the matter of it, it was incontestably just, and there was no iniquity in it; *I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right and consonant to the eternal rulers and reasons of good and evil*. The heathen deities dictated those things to their worshippers which were the reproach of the human nature, and tended to the extirpation of virtue: but God speaks righteousness, dictates that which is right in itself, and tends to make men righteous; and therefore he is God, and there is none else.

20. ¶ Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. 21. Tell ye, and bring them near: yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. 22. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. 23. I have sworn by myself; the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. 24. Surely, shall one say, In the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. 25. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

What is here said is intended as before,

1. For the conviction of idolaters, to shew them their folly in worshipping gods that cannot help them, and neglecting a God that can. Let all that are escaped of the nations, not only the people of the Jews, but those of other nations that were by Cyrus released out of captivity in Babylon; let them come and hear what is to be said against their worshipping idols, that they may be cured of it as well as the Jews; that Babylon which had of old been the womb of idolatry, might now become the grave of it. Let the refugees assemble themselves and come together; God hath something to say to them for their own good, and it is this, that idolatry is a foolish, foolish thing, upon two accounts:

(1.) It is setting up a refuge of lies for themselves. They set up the wood of their graven image, for that is the substratum; though they overlay it with gold, deck it with ornaments, and make a god of it, yet still it is but wood. They pray to a god that cannot save; for he cannot hear, he cannot help, he can do nothing; how do they disparage themselves that give honour to that as a god which cannot as a god give good to them? How do they deceive themselves who pray for relief to that which is in no capacity at all to relieve them? Certainly they have no knowledge, or are brutish in their knowledge, who take so much pains and do so much penance in seeking the favour of a god that has no power.

(2.) It is setting up a rival with God, the only living and true God, *ver. 21*. Summon them all, tell them the great cause shall again be tried, though once adjudged between God and Baal; bring them near, and let them take counsel together, what to say in defence of themselves and their idols: It shall as before be put upon this issue; let them shew when any of their gods did with any certainty foretell future events, as the God of Israel hath done, and it shall be acknowledged they have some colour for their pretensions. But none of them ever did; their prophets were lying prophets; but *I the Lord have told it from that time*, long before it came to pass; therefore you must own there is no God else beside me. (1.) There is none but he that is fit to rule; he is a just God and rules in justice, and will execute

justice for those that are oppressed. (2.) There is none but he that is able to help; as he is a just God, so he is the Saviour that can save without the assistance of any, but without whom none can save. Those therefore have no sense of truth and falsehood, good and evil, no not of their own interest, that set up any in competition with him.

2. For the comfort and encouragement of all God's faithful worshippers, whoever they are, *ver. 22*. They that worship idols pray to gods that cannot save; but the God of Israel saith, saith it to all the ends of the earth, to his people, though they are scattered into the utmost corners of the world, and seem to be lost and forgotten in their dispersion, let them but look to me by faith and prayer, look above instruments and second causes; look off from all pretenders and look up to me, and they shall be saved. It seems to refer farther to the conversion of the Gentiles that live in the ends of the earth; the most distant nations, when the standard of the gospel is set up; *to it shall the Gentiles seek*. When Christ is lifted up from the earth, as the brazen serpent upon the pole, he shall draw the eyes of all men to him; they shall all be invited to look unto him, as the stung Israelites did to the brazen serpent: and so strong is the eye of faith, that by divine grace it will reach the Saviour, and fetch in salvation by him even from the ends of the earth; for *he is God and there is none else*.

Two things are here promised for the abundant satisfaction of all that by faith look to the Saviour.

1. That the glory of the God they serve shall be greatly advanced; and this will be good news to all the Lord's people, that how much soever they and their names are depressed, God will be exalted, *ver. 23*. This is confirmed by an oath that we might have strong consolation; *I have sworn by myself* (and God can swear by no greater, *Heb. vi. 13*) *the word is gone out of my mouth*, and shall neither be recalled nor return empty; it is gone forth in righteousness: for it is the most reasonable, equitable thing in the world, that he that made all should be Lord of all; that since all beings are derived from him, they should all be devoted to him. He hath said it, and it shall be made good, *I will be exalted*, Psal. xlii. 10. He hath assured us, (1.) That he will be universally submitted to, that the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdom, they shall do him homage, *unto me every knee shall bow*; and they shall bind themselves by an oath of allegiance to him, *unto me every tongue shall swear*. This is applied to the dominion of our Lord Jesus, *Rom. xiv. 10, 11*. *We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*, and give account to him; for it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God*; and it seems to be referred to *Psal. ii. 9, 10*. If the heart be brought into obedience to Christ, and made willing in the day of his power, the knee will bow to him in humble adorations and addresses, in a cheerful obedience to his commands, submission to his disposal, and compliance with his will in both; and the tongue will swear to him, will lay a bond upon the soul to engage it for ever to him; for he that bears an honest mind doth never startle at assurances. (2.) That he will be universally sought unto; and application made to him from all parts of the world; *unto him shall men of distant countries come*, to implore his favour: *unto thee shall all come with their requests*, *Psal. lxxv. 2*. and when Christ was lifted up from the earth, he drew all men to him. (3.) That it shall be to no purpose to make opposition to him; all that are incensed against him, that rage at his bonds and cords, the nations that are angry because he hath taken to himself his great power, and hath reigned, that have been incensed at the strictness of his laws, the success of his gospel, and the spiritual nature of his kingdom, they shall be ashamed; some shall be brought to a penitential shame for it, others to remediless ruin. One way or other, sooner or later, all that are uneasy at Christ's government and victories, will be made ashamed of their folly and obstinacy. Blessed be God for the assurance here given us, that whatever becomes of us and our interests, *the Lord will reign for ever*.

2. That the welfare of the souls they are concerned for, shall be effectually secured; *Surely shall one say*; and another shall learn by his example to say the same, so that all the seed of Israel, according to the Spirit, shall say and stand to it; 1. That God hath a sufficiency for them, and that in Christ there is enough to supply all their needs; *In the Lord is all righteousness and strength*, so the margin reads it; he is himself righteous and strong, he can do every thing, and yet will do nothing but what is unquestionably just and equitable; he hath also wherewithal to supply the needs of those that seek to him, and depend upon him, upon the equity of his providence and the treasures of his grace; nay we may say, not only he hath it, but in him we have it, because he hath said he will be to us a God. In the Lord the captive Jews had righteousness; *i. e.* grace both to sanctify their afflictions to them, and to qualify them for deliverance; and strength for their support and escape. In the Lord Jesus we have righteousness to recommend us to the good-will of God towards us, and strength to begin and carry on the good work of God in us; he is the fountain of both, and on him we must depend for both, *must go forth in his strength, and make mention of his righteousness*, *Psal. lxxi. 16*. 2. That they shall have an abundant bliss and satisfaction in this; (1.) The people of the Jews shall in the Lord be justified before men, and openly glory in their God. The oppressors reproached them, loaded them with calumny, and boasted even of a right to oppress them, as abandoned of their God; but when God shall work out their deliverance, that shall be their justification from these hard censures, and therefore they shall glory in it. (2.) All true Christians that depend upon Christ for strength and righteousness, in him shall be justified, and shall glory in that. Observe, (1.) All believers are the seed of Israel, an upright, praying seed. (2.) The great privilege they enjoy of Jesus Christ is, that in him, and for his sake, they are justified before God, Christ being made of God to them righteousness. All that are justified will own it in Christ that they are justified, nor could they be justified by any other; and those who are justified shall be glorified. And therefore, (3.) The great duty believers owe to Christ, is to glory in him, and to make their boast of him; therefore he is made all in all to us, that *whose glories may glory in the Lord*; and let us comply with this intention.

C H A P. XLVI.

God by the prophet here, designing shortly to deliver them out of their captivity, prepares them for that deliverance, by possessing them with a detestation of idols, and with a believing confidence in God, even their own God. (1.) Let them not be afraid of the idols of Babylon, as if they could any way obstruct their deliverance, for they should be defaced, *ver. 1, 2*. But let them trust in that God, who had often delivered them, to do it still, to do it now, *ver. 3, 4*. (2.) Let them not think to make idols of their own, images of the God of Israel, by them to worship him, as the Babylonians worship their gods, *ver. 5, 6, 7*. Let them not be so foolish, *ver. 8*, but have an eye to God in his word, not in an image; let them depend upon that, and upon the promises and predictions of it, and God's power to accomplish them all, *ver. 9, 10, 11*. And let them know that the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of none effect, *ver. 12, 13*.

1. BEL

1. **B**EL boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast. 2. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. 3. ¶ Harken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne *by me* from the belly, which are carried from the womb: 4. And *even to your old age I am he*; and *even to hoar hairs will I carry you*: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

We are here told,

1. That the false gods will certainly fail their worshippers, then when they have most need of them, *ver. 1, 2.* Bel and Nebo were two celebrated idols of Babylon; some make Bel to be a contraction of Baal; others rather think not, but that it was Belus, one of their first kings, who after his death was deified; As Bel was a deified prince, so (some think) Nebo was a deified prophet, for so Nebo signifieth; so that Bel and Nebo were their Jupiter and Mercury, or Apollo. Barnabas and Paul passed at Lystra for Jupiter and Mercury. The names of these idols, were taken into the names of their princes; Bel into Belshazzar's, Nebo into Nebuchadnezzar's, and Nebuzaradan's, &c. These gods they had long worshipped, and in their revels praised them for their successes, as appears, *Dan. v. 4.* and insulted over Israel, as if Bel and Nebo were too hard for Jehovah and should detain them in captivity in defiance of their God. Now that this might be no discouragement to the poor captives, God here tells them what should become of these idols, which they threaten them with. When Cyrus takes Babylon, down go the idols. It was usual then with conquerors to destroy the gods of the places and people they conquered, and to put the gods of their own nation in the room of them, *chap. xxxvii. 19.* Cyrus will do so; and then Bel and Nebo, that they were set on high and looked great, bold and erect, stoop and bow down at the feet of the soldiers that plunder their temples. And because there is a great deal of gold and silver upon them, which was intended to adorn them, but proves to expose them, they carry them away with the rest of the spoil; the carriers' horses or mules are laden with them, and their other idols, to be sent among other lumber, for so it seems they accounted them rather than treasure, into Persia. So far are they from being able to support their worshippers, that they are themselves a heavy load in the waggons, and a burden to the weary beast. The idols cannot help one another, *ver. 2.* They stoop, they bow down together, they are all alike, tottering things, and their day is come to fall; their worshippers cannot help them; they could not deliver the burden out of the enemy's hand, but themselves both the idols and the idolaters, are gone into captivity. Let not therefore God's people be afraid of either. When God's ark was taken prisoner by the Philistines, it proved a burden, not to the beasts, but to the conquerors, who were forced to return it; but when Bel and Nebo are gone into captivity, their worshippers may even give their good word with them, they will never recover themselves.

2. That the true God will never fail his worshippers; you hear what is become of Bel and Nebo, now *harken to me, O house of Jacob, ver. 3, 4.* Am I such a God as these? No; though you are brought low, and the house of Israel is but a remnant your God hath been, is, and ever will be, your powerful and faithful protector.

1. Let God's Israel do him the justice to own that he hath hitherto been kind to them, careful of them, tender over them, and hath all along done well for them. Let them own, 1. That he bore them at first; *I have made.* Out of what womb came they, but that of his mercy and grace, and promise? He formed them into a people, and gave them their constitution. Every good man is what God makes him. (2.) That he bore them up all along; you have been *borne by me from the belly, and carried from the womb.* God began betimes to do them good, as soon as ever they were formed into a nation, nay, when as yet they were very few and strangers, God took them under a special protection, and *suffered no man to do them wrong, Psal. cv. 12, 13, 14.* In the infancy of their state, when they were not only foolish and helpless, as children, but froward and peevish, God carried them in the arms of his power and love, bore them *as upon eagles' wings, Exod. xix. 4.* Deut. xxxii. 11. Moses had not patience to carry them, *as the nursing father doth the sucking child, Num. xi. 12.* But God bore them, and bore their manners, Acts xiii. 18. And as God began early to do them good, when Israel was a child, then I loved him; so he had constantly continued to do them good; he had carried them from the womb to this day. And we may all witness for God that he hath been thus gracious to us; we have been born by him from the belly, from the womb, else we had died from the womb, and given up the ghost when we came out of the belly; we have been the constant care of his kind providence, carried in the arms of his power, and in the bosom of his love and pity. The new man is so; all that in us that is born of God is borne up by him, else it would soon fall. Our spiritual life is sustained by his grace, as necessarily and constantly as our natural life by his providence. The saints have acknowledged that God has carried them from the womb, and have encouraged themselves with the consideration of it in their greatest straits, *Psal. xxii. 9, 10.—lxxi. 5, 6.—17.*

2. He will then do them the kindness to promise that he will never leave them; he that was their first will be their last, that was the author will be the finisher of their well-being, *ver. 4.* You have been *borne by me from the belly*, nursed when you were children; and *even to your old age, I am he*, when by reason of your decays and infirmities you will need help as much as in your infancy. Israel was now growing old, so was their covenant by which they were incorporated, *Heb. viii. 13.* *Grey hairs were here and there upon them, Hos. vii. 9.* And they had hastened their old age and the calamities of it, by their irregularities; but God will not cast them off now, will not fail them when their strength fails; he is still their God, will still carry them in the same everlasting arms that were laid under them in Moses's time, *Deut. xxxiii. 27.* He has made them, and owns his interest in them, and therefore he will bear, will bear with their infirmities, and bear them up under their afflictions, *even I will carry and will deliver them; I will now bear them up on eagles' wings out of Babylon, as in their infancy I bore them out of Egypt.* This promise to aged Israel, is applicable to every aged Israelite. God hath graciously engaged to support and comfort his faithful servants, even in their old age. Even to your old age, when you grow unfit for business, when you are compassed with infirmities, and perhaps your relations begin to grow weary of you; yet *I am he*: he that I am; he that I have been; the very same, by whom you have been borne from the belly and carried from the womb. You change, but I am the same. I am he that promised to be; he that you have found me; he that you would have me to be. *I will carry you, I will bear, will bear you up, and bear you out, and will carry you on in your way, and carry you home at last.*

5. ¶ To whom will ye liken me; and make me equal, and compare me that we may be like? 6. They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. 7. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. 8. Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. 9. Remember the former things of old: for *I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me.* 10. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11. Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. 12. Harken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: 13. I bring near my righteousness: It shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

The deliverance of Israel by the destruction of Babylon (the general subject of all these chapters) is here insisted upon, and again promised, for the conviction both of idolaters who set up rivals with God, and of oppressors that were enemies to the people of God.

1. For the conviction of those that made and worshipped idols, especially those of Israel that did so, that would have images of their God as the Babylonians had of theirs.

He challengeth them either to frame an image that should be thought a resemblance of him, or to let up any being that should stand in competition with him, *ver. 5.* To whom will ye liken me? It is absurd to think of representing an infinite and eternal Spirit by the figure of any creature whatsoever; it is to change his truth into a lie, and turn his glory into shame. None ever saw any similitude of him, nor can see his face and live. To whom then can we liken God? Isa. xl. 18, 25. It is likewise absurd to think of making any creature equal with the Creator, who is infinitely above the noblest creatures, yea, or to make any comparison between the creature and the Creator, since between infinite and finite there is no proportion.

(2.) He exposeth the folly of those that made idols, and then prayed to them, *ver. 6, 7.* (1.) They were at great charge upon their idols, and spared no cost to fit them for their purpose; they *lavish gold out of the bag*; no little will serve, and they do not care how much goes, though they pinch their families and weaken their estates by it. How doth the profaneness of idolaters shame the niggardliness of many who call themselves God's servants, but are for a religion that will cost them nothing! Some *lavish gold out of the bag*, to make an idol of it in the house, while others *hoard up gold in the bag*, to make an idol of it in the heart; for covetousness is idolatry, as dangerous though not so scandalous as the other. They *weigh silver in the balance*, either to be the matter of the idol, for even they that were most sottish, had so much sense as to think God should be served with the best they had, the best they could possibly afford; they that represented him by a calf, made it a golden one; or to pay the workmen wages. The service of sin often proves very expensive. (2.) They were in great care about their idols and took no little pains about them, *ver. 7.* They bear him upon their own shoulders, and do not hire porters to do it; they carry him and set him in his place, more like a dead corpse than a living god: they set him on a pedestal, and he standeth, they take a great deal of pains to fasten him, and from his place shall he not remove, that they may know where to find him, though at the same time they know he can neither move a hand nor stir a step to do them any kindness. (3.) After all they paid great respect to their idols, though they were but the work of their own hands, and the creatures of their own fancies; when the goldsmith hath made it that which they please to call a god, they fall down, yea, worship it. If they magnified themselves too much in pretending to make a god, as if they would atone for that, they vilified themselves as much in prostrating themselves to a god that they knew the original of. And if they were deceived by the custom of their country in making such gods as those, they did no less deceive themselves when they cried unto them; though they knew they could not answer them, could not understand what they said to them, nor so much as reply yea, or no, much less could they save them out of their trouble. Now shall any that have some knowledge of, and interest in the true and living God thus make fools of themselves?

(3.) He puts it to themselves, and their own reason, let that judge in the case, *ver. 8.* Remember this, that hath been often told you, what senseless, helpless things idols are, and shew yourselves men, men and not brutes, men not babes; act with reason, act with resolution, act for your own interest; do a wise thing, do a brave thing, and scorn to disparage your own judgment as you do when you worship idols. Note, Sinners would become saints if they would but shew themselves men; if they would but support the dignity of their nature, and use aright the powers, and capacities of it. Many things you have been minded of, bring them again to mind, recal them into your memories, and revolve them there, *O ye transgressors, consider your ways; remember whence ye are fallen; repent, and to recover yourselves.*

(4.) He again produceth incontestible proofs that he is God, that he, and none but he is so, *ver. 9.* *I am God, and there is none else, none beside me, I am God and there is none like me.* This is that which we have need to be minded of again and again; for proof of it he refers,

1. To the sacred history, Remember the former things of old, what the God of Israel did for their people in his beginnings, whether he did not that for them which no one else could, and which the false gods did not nor could do for their worshippers. Remember those things and you will own that *I am God, and there is none else.* And this is a good reason why we should give glory to him as a non-such, and why we should not give that glory to any other which is due to him alone, *Exod. xv. 11.*

2. To the sacred prophecy. He is God alone, for it is he only that declares the end from the beginning, *ver. 10.* From the beginning of time he declared the end of time, the end of all things, in the prophecy of *Enoch*, behold the Lord comes. From the beginning of a nation, he declares what the end of it will be; he told Israel what should befall them in the latter days, what their end should be, and withed they were so wise as to consider it. *Deut. xxxii. 20, 29.* From the beginning of an event he declares what the end of it will be; known unto God are all his works, and

when he pleaseth, he maketh them known; farther than prophecy guides us it is impossible for us to find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end, Eccl. iii. 11. He declares from ancient times the things that are not yet done. There are many scripture prophecies which were delivered long ago, but are not yet accomplished; but the accomplishing of some in the mean time is an earnest of the accomplishment of the rest in due time. And by this it appears he is God and none else, it is he, and none but he that can say, and make his words good, my counsel shall stand, and all the powers of hell and earth cannot control or disannul it, nor all their policies correct or countermines it. As God's operations are all according to his counsels, so his counsels shall all be fulfilled in his operations, and none of his measures shall be broke, none of his designs shall miscarry. This yields abundant satisfaction to those that have bound up all their comforts in God's counsels, that his counsel shall undoubtedly stand; and if we are come to this, that whatever pleaseth God pleaseth us, nothing can contribute more to make us easy, than to be assured of this, that *God will do all his pleasure.* Psalm cxxxv. 6.

The accomplishment of this particular prophecy which relates to the elevation of Cyrus, and his agency in the deliverance of God's people out of their captivity, is instanced in for the confirmation of this truth, that the Lord is God, and there is none else; and this is a thing which shall shortly come to pass, ver. 11. God doth by his counsel call a ravenous bird from the east, a bird of prey, Cyrus, who they say had a nose like the beak of a hawk or eagle, to which some think this alludes; or as others say, to the eagle which was his standard, as it was afterwards that of the Romans, to which there is supposed to be a reference, Matt. xxiv. 28. Cyrus came from the east at God's call, for he is Lord of hosts, and of those that have hosts at command; and if God give him a call, he will give him success. He is the man that shall execute God's counsel, though he comes from a far country and knows nothing of the matter. Note, Even those that know not and mind not God's revealed will, yet are made use of to fulfil the counsels of his secret will, which shall all be punctually accomplished in their season by what hand he pleaseth. That which is here added to ratify this particular prediction, may abundantly shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel: *I have spoken it by my servants the prophets, and what I have spoken is just the same with what I have purposed; for though God has many things in his purposes which are not in his prophecies, he has nothing in his prophecies but what are in his purposes; and he will do it, for he will never change his mind; he will bring it to pass for it is not in the power of any creature to control him.* Observe with what a majesty he saith it, as one having authority, *I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass,* dictum, factum. *I have purposed it;* and he doth not say, *I will take care it shall be done, but I will do it.* Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one tittle of the word of God.

2. For the conviction of those that daringly opposed the counsels of God, assurance is here given not only that they shall be accomplished, but they shall be accomplished very shortly, ver. 12, 13. This is addressed to the stout-hearted, that is, either (1.) The proud and obstinate Babylonians, that are far from righteousness, far from doing justice or shewing mercy to those they have power over; they say they will never let the oppressed go free, but will still detain them in spite of their petitions, or God's predictions; that are far from any thing of clemency or compassion to the miserable; or (2.) The unhumiliated Jews, that have been long under the hammer, long in the furnace, but are not broken, are not melted; that like the unbelieving, murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, think yourselves far from God's righteousness, i. e. from the performance of his promise, and his appearing to judge for you, and by your distrusts set yourselves at yet a farther distance from it, and keep good things from yourselves, as your fathers, who could not enter into the land of promise because of unbelief. This is applicable to the Jewish nation when they rejected the gospel of Christ, though they followed after the law of righteousness, yet attained not to righteousness, because they sought it not of faith, Rom. ix. 31, 22. They perished far from righteousness, and it was because they were stout-hearted, Rom. x. 3.

Now to them God saith, that whatever they think, the one in presumption, the other in despair, (1.) Salvation shall be certainly wrought for God's people. If men will not do them justice God will, and his righteousness shall effect that for them, which men's righteousness would not reach to. He will place salvation in Zion, i. e. he will make Jerusalem a place of safety and defence to all those who will plant themselves there; thence shall salvation go forth for Israel his glory. God glories in his Israel: and he will be glorified in the salvation he designs to work out for them: it shall redound greatly to his honour. This salvation shall be in Zion, for thence the gospel shall take rise Isa. ii. 3. thither the Redeemer comes, Isa. lix. 20, Rom. xi. 20. And it is Zion's king that hath salvation, Zech. ix. 9. (2.) It shall be very shortly wrought; this is especially insisted on to those who thought it at a distance, I bring near my righteousness, nearer than you think of, perhaps it is nearest of all when your straits are greatest, and your enemies most injurious; it shall not be far off, when there is occasion for it, Psal. lxxxv. 9. Behold, the Judge stands before the door, My salvation shall not tarry any longer than till it is ripe and you are ready for it; and, therefore though it tarry, wait for it; wait patiently, for he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.

C H A P. XLVII.

Infinite wisdom could have ordered things so as that Israel might have been released, and yet Babylon unburt, but if they will harden their hearts and will not let the people go, they must thank themselves that their ruin is made to pave the way to Israel's release, and therefore that ruin is here in this chapter largely foretold, not to gratify a spirit of revenge in the people of God that had been used barbarously by them, but to encourage their faith and hope concerning their own deliverance, and to be a type of the downfall of that great enemy of the New Testament church, which in the revelation goes under the name of Babylon. In this chapter we have (1.) The greatness of the ruin threatened; that Babylon shall be brought down to the dust, and made completely miserable, should fall from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity, ver. 1—5. (2.) The sin that provoked God to bring this ruin upon them. (1.) Their cruelty to the people of God, ver. 6. (2.) Their pride and carnal security, ver. 7—9. (3.) Their confidence in themselves, and contempt of God, ver. 10. (4.) Their use of magic arts and their dependence upon enchantments and sorceries, which should be so far from standing them in any stead, that they should but hasten their ruin, ver. 11—15.

1. COME down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground; there is no

throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. 2. Take the mill-stones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. 3. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered; yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. 4. As for our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel, 5. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms. 6. ¶ I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

In these verses God by the prophet sends a messenger even to Babylon, like that of Jonah to Nineveh, the time is at hand when Babylon shall be destroyed; fair warning is thus given her that she may by repentance prevent the ruin, and there may be a lengthening of her tranquillity.

We may observe here,

1. God's controversy with Babylon; we will begin with that, for there all the calamity begins; she hath made God her enemy, and then who can befriend her? let her know that the righteous Judge to whom vengeance belongs hath said, ver. 3. *I will take vengeance.* She has provoked God, and shall be reckoned with for it, when the measure of her iniquities is full. Woe to those on whom God comes to take vengeance, for who knows the power of his anger? and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands? Were it a man like ourselves that would be revenged on us, we might hope to be a match for him, either to make our escape from him, or to make our part good with him. But he saith, *I will not meet thee as a man,* not with the compassion of a man, but I will be to thee as a lion, and a young lion, Hos. v. 14. Or rather, not with the strength of a man, which is easily resisted, but with the power of a God, which cannot be resisted. Not with the justice of a man, which may be bribed or biased, or mollified by a foolish pity, but with the justice of a God, which is strict and severe, and can never be evaded. As in pardoning the penitent, so in punishing the impenitent, he is God and not man, Hos. xi. 9.

2. The particular ground of this controversy; we are sure there is cause for it, and it is a just cause, it is the vengeance of his temple, Jer. l. 28. it is for violence done to Zion, Jer. li. 35. God will plead his people's cause against them. It is acknowledged, ver. 6. that God had in wrath delivered his people into the hands of the Babylonians, had made use of them for the correction of his children, and had by their means polluted his inheritance, had left his peculiar people exposed to suffer in common with the rest of the nations, had suffered the heathen who should have been kept at a distance to come into his sanctuary, and defile his temple, Psal. lxxix. 1. Herein God was righteous, but the Babylonians carried the matter too far, and when they had them in their hands, triumphing to see a people that had been so much in reputation for wisdom, holiness, and honour, brought thus low, with a base and servile spirit they trampled upon them, and shewed them no mercy, no not the common instances of humanity which the miserable are intitled to purely by their misery. They used them barbarously, and with an air of contempt, nay and of complacency in their calamities. They were brought under the yoke, but as if that were not enough, they laid the yoke on very heavily, adding affliction to the afflicted. Nay they laid it on the ancient, the elders in years, who were past their labour, and must sink under a yoke which those in their youthful strength would easily bear. The elders in office, those that had been judges and magistrates, and persons of the first rank, they took a pride in putting them to the meanest, hardest drudgery. Jeremiah laments this, that the faces of elders were not honoured, Lam. v. 12. Nothing brings a surer and sorer ruin upon any people than cruelty, especially to God's Israel.

3. The terror of this controversy; she has reason to tremble when she is told who it is that has this quarrel with her, ver. 4. As for our Redeemer, our Goel, that undertakes to plead our cause as the avenger of our blood; he has two names which speak not only comfort to us, but terror to our adversaries. (1.) He is the Lord of hosts, that has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth. Woe to those against whom the Lord fights, for the whole creation is at war with them. (2.) He is the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us, it was his residence among us, and will faithfully perform all the promises he hath made to us. God's power and holiness are engaged against Babylon, and for Zion. This may fitly be applied to Christ, our great Redeemer, he is both Lord of hosts, and the Holy one of Israel.

4. The consequences of it to Babylon, she is called a virgin, because so she thought herself, though she was the mother of harlots; beautiful as a virgin and courted by all about her; she had been called tender and delicate, ver. 1. and the lady of kingdoms, ver. 5. but now the case is altered.

1. Her honour is gone, and she must bid farewell to all her dignity; she that had sat at the upper end of the world, sat in state, and sat at ease, must now come down and sit in the dust, as very mean and a deep mourner, must sit on the ground, for she shall be so emptied and impoverished, that she shall not have a seat left her to sit upon.

2. Her power is gone, and she must bid farewell to all her dominion; she shall rule no more as she has done, nor give law as she has done to her neighbours, there is no throne, none for thee, O daughter of the Chaldeans. Note those that abuse their honour and power provoke God to deprive them of it, and to make them come down and sit in the dust.

3. Her ease and pleasure is gone; she shall no more be called tender and delicate, as she has been, for she shall not only be deprived of all those things with which she pampered herself, but shall be put to hard service, and made to feel both want and pain, which should be more than doubly grievous to her that, when time was, would not venture to set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and for delicacy, Deut. xxviii. 56. It is our wisdom not to use ourselves to be tender and delicate, because we know not how hardly others may use us before we die, nor what straits we may be reduced to.

4. Her liberty is gone, and she is brought into a state of servitude, and as sore a bondage as she in her prosperity had brought others to. Even the great men of Babylon must now receive the same law from the conquerors that they used to give to the conquered; take the mill-stone, and grind meal, ver. 2. set to work, to hard labour, like beating hemp in Bridewell, which will make thee sweat so as that thou must throw off all thy head-dresses, and uncover thy locks. When they were driven from one place to another, at the capricious humour of their masters, they must be forced to wade up to the middle through the waters; to make the bare leg, and uncover the thigh, that they might pass over the rivers, which would be a great mortification to them that used to ride in state; but let them not complain, for when time

time was, just thus they had used their captives; and *with what measure they then meted, it is now measured to them again.* Let those that have power use it with temper and moderation, considering that the spoke that is uppermost will be under.

5. All her glory, and all her glorying is gone. Instead of glory, she has ignominy, *ver. 3. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, and thy shame shall be seen* according to the base and barbarous usage they commonly gave their captives, to whom for covetousness of their clothes they did not leave rags sufficient to cover their nakedness, so void were they of the modesty, as well as of the pity due to the human nature. Instead of glorying she sits silent, and *gets into darkness, ver. 5.* ashamed to shew her face, for she has quite lost her credit, and *shall no more be called the lady of kingdoms.* Note, God can make those sit silent that used to make the greatest noise in the world, and send those into darkness that used to make the greatest figure. Let him that glories therefore glory in a God that changeth not, and not in any worldly wealth, pleasure, or honour, which is subject to change.

7. ¶ And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. 8. Therefore hear now this, *thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me, I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:* 9. But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. 10. ¶ For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me. 11. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. 12. Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. 13. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. 14. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: *there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.* 15. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, *even thy merchants from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.*

Babylon now doomed to ruin is here justly upbraided with her pride, luxury, and security in the day of her prosperity, and the confidence she had in her own wisdom and forecast, and particularly in the prognostications and counsels of the astrologers. And these things are mentioned both to justify God in bringing these judgments upon her, and to mortify her and put her to so much the greater shame under these judgments; for when God comes forth to take vengeance, glory belongs to him, but confusion to the sinner.

1. The Babylonians are here upbraided with their pride and haughtiness, and the mighty conceit they had of themselves, because of their wealth and power, and the vast extent of their dominion; it was the language both of the government, and of the body of the people; *thou sayest in thine heart, (and God who searcheth all hearts, can tell men what they say there, though they never speak it out) I am, and none else besides me, ver. 8.* and the same again, *ver. 10.* The repetition of this part of the charge intimates that they said it often, and that it was very offensive to God. It is the very word that God had often said concerning himself, *I am, and none else besides me,* speaking his self existence, his infinite and incomparable perfections, and his sole supremacy, and all this Babylon pretends to. And no wonder if she that assumed a power to make what gods and goddesses she pleased for the people to worship, made herself one among the rest. It is presumption to say of any creature it is, and there is not its like, there is none besides it, for creatures stand pretty much upon a level with one another; but it is insufferable arrogance for any to say so of themselves, and an evidence of their self-ignorance.

2. They are upbraided with their luxury and love of ease, *ver. 8. Thou that art given to pleasure, art a slave to them; art in them as in thine element, and that thou mayest enjoy them without disturbance or interruption dwellest carelessly, and layest nothing to heart.* Great wealth and plenty is a great temptation to sensuality; and where there is fulness of bread, there is commonly abundance of idleness. But if those that are given to pleasures and dwell carelessly, would but hear this, that *for all these things God shall bring them into judgment,* it would be a damp to their mirth, an allay to their pleasure, and would find them something to be in care about.

3. They are upbraided with their carnal security, and their vain confidence of the perpetuity of their pomps and pleasures. This is much insisted on here. Observe,

(1.) The cause of their security. They therefore thought themselves safe and out of danger, not because they were ignorant of the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments, and the inevitable fate that attends states and kingdoms, as well as particular persons, but *because they did not lay this to heart,* did not apply it to themselves, nor give it a due consideration. They lulled themselves asleep in ease and pleasure, and dreamt nothing else but that *to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.* They did not remember the latter end of it; nor the latter end of their prosperity, that it is a fading flower, and will wither; not the latter end of their iniquity, that it will be bitterness, that the day will come when their injustice and oppression must be reckoned for and punished. She did not remember her latter end; so some read it, she forgot that her day will come to fall, and what would be in the end hereof. It was the ruin of Jerusalem, *Lam. i. 9. She remembered not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully, and it was Baby-*

lon's ruin too. Therefore the children of men are easy, and think themselves safe in their sinful ways, because they never think of death, and judgment, and their future state.

(2.) The ground of their security. They trusted in their wickedness, and in their wisdom, *ver. 10.* (1.) Their power and wealth, which they had gotten by fraud and oppression, was their confidence. Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, as Doeg, *Pf. v. 2-7.* Many have so debauched their own consciences, and have got to such a pitch of daring wickedness, that they stick at nothing, and this they trust to, to carry them through those difficulties which embarrass men that make conscience of what they say and do. They doubt not but they shall be too hard for all their enemies, because they dare lie, and kill, and forswear themselves, and do any thing for their interest. Thus they trust in their wickedness to secure them, which is the only thing that will ruin them. (2.) Their policy and craft which they called their wisdom was their confidence. They thought they could outwit all mankind, and therefore might set all their enemies at defiance, but their wisdom and knowledge perverted them, and *turned them out of the way,* made them forget themselves, and the preparation necessary to be made for hereafter.

(3.) The expressions of their security. Three things this proud and haughty monarchy said in her security. (1.) I shall be a lady for ever; she looked upon the patent of her honour to be not during the pleasure of the sovereign Lord the fountain of honour, or during her own good behaviour, but to be perpetual, to the present generation and their heirs and successors for ever; she is not only proud that she is a lady, but confident she shall be a lady for ever. Thus the New Testament Babylon saith, *I sit as a queen and shall see no sorrow, Rev. xviii. 7.* Those ladies mistake themselves, and consider not their latter end, who think they shall be ladies for ever, for death will shortly lay their honour with them in the dust. Saints shall be saints for ever, but lords and ladies will not be so for ever. (2.) I shall not sit as a widow in solitude and sorrow, shall never lose that power and wealth I am thus wedded to; the monarchy shall never want a monarch to espouse and protect it, and be a husband to the state, nor shall I know the loss of children: she was as confident of the continuance of the numbers of her people, as of the dignity of her prince, and had no fear of being either deposed or depopulated. Those that are in the height of prosperity, are apt to fancy themselves out of the reach of adverse fate. (3.) None seeth me when I do amiss, and therefore there will be none to call me to an account. It is common for sinners to promise themselves impunity, because they promise themselves secrecy in their wicked ways. They trust to their wicked arts and designs to stand them in stead, because they think they have carried them on so plausibly as that none can discern the wickedness and deceit of them.

(4.) The punishment of their security. It shall be their ruin; and it will be, 1. A complete ruin, the ruin of all their comforts and confidences. *These two things shall come upon thee,* the very two things that thou didst set at defiance, *loss of children and widowhood.* Both thy princes and thy people shall be cut off, so that thou shalt be no more a government, no more a nation. Note, God often brings upon secure sinners, those very mischiefs which they least feared, and thought themselves in least danger of. They shall come upon thee in their perfection, with all their aggravating circumstances, and without any thing to allay or mitigate them. Afflictions to God's children are not afflictions in perfection: Widowhood is not to them a calamity in perfection, for they have this to comfort themselves with, that their maker is their husband; loss of children is not, for he is better to them than ten sons; but on his enemies they come in perfection. Widowhood and loss of children, are either of them great griefs, but both together great indeed. Naomi thinks she may well be called Marah, when she is left both of her sons and of her husband, *Ruth i. 5.* and yet on her these evils did not come in perfection, for she had two daughters-in-law left that were comforts to her; but on Babylon they come in perfection, she has no comfort remaining. (2.) It shall be a sudden and surprising ruin. The evil shall come in one day, nay in a moment, which will make it much the more terrible, especially to those that were so very secure. *Evil shall come upon thee,* and thou shalt neither have time nor way to provide against it, or to prepare for it, *for thou shalt not know from whence it riseth,* and therefore shalt not know where to stand upon thy guard. *Thou shalt not know the morning thereof,* so the Hebrew phrase is; we know just when and where the day will break, and the sun rise, but we know not what the day when it is come will bring forth, nor when or where trouble will arise; perhaps the storm may come from that point of the compass which we little thought of. Babylon pretended to great wisdom and knowledge, *ver. 10.* but with all her knowledge cannot foresee, nor with all her wisdom prevent the ruin threatened. *Desolation shall come upon thee suddenly,* as a thief in the night, which thou shalt not know, i. e. which thou little thoughtest of. Fair warning was indeed given them, by this and other prophets of the Lord, of this desolation, but they slighted that notice, and would give no credit to it, and therefore justly it is so ordered that they should have no other notice of it, but that partly through their own security, and partly through the swiftness and subtlety of the enemy, when it came it should be a perfect surprise to them. Those that slight the warnings of the written word, let them not expect any other premonitions. (3.) It shall be irresistible ruin, and such as they should have no fence against, *mischief shall come upon thee* so suddenly, that thou shalt have no time to turn thee in, so strongly that thou shalt not be able to make head against it, and to put it off and save thyself. There is no opposing the judgments of God when they come with commission. Babylon herself, with all her wealth, and power, and multitude, is not able to put off the mischief that comes.

4. They are upbraided with their divinations, their magical and astrological arts and sciences, which the Chaldeans above any other nations were notorious for, and from them other nations borrowed all their learning of that kind.

1. This is here spoken of as one of their provoking sins which would bring the judgments of God upon them, *ver. 9.* These evils shall come upon thee to punish thee for the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine enchantments. Witchcraft is a sin in its own nature exceeding heinous, it is giving that honour to the devil which is due to God only; making God's enemy our guide, and the father of lies our oracle: in Babylon it was a national sin, and had the protection and countenance of the government; conjurers, for aught appears, were their privy counsellors, and prime ministers of state. And shall not God visit for these things? Observe what a multitude, what a great abundance of sorceries and enchantments there were among them; such a bewitching sin this was, that when it was once admitted, it spread like wildfire, and they never knew an end of it; the deceived and the deceivers both increased strangely.

2. It is here spoken of as one of their vain confidences, which they relied much upon, but should be deceived in, for it would not serve so much as to give them notice of the judgments coming, much less to guard against them.

1. They are here upbraided with the mighty pains they had taken about their sorceries and enchantments; *thou hast laboured in them from thy youth.* They trained up their young men in these studies, and those that applied themselves

themselves to them were indefatigable in their labours about them; reading books, making observations, trying experiments. Well, let them stand up now with their enchantments, and try their skill in the critical moment: let them make a stand, if they can, in opposition to the invading enemy: let them stand to offer their service to their country; but to what purpose? *Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels* of this kind; hast advised with them all, but hast received no satisfaction from them: the different schemes they have erected, and the different judgments they have given, have but increased thy perplexity, and tired thee out. In a multitude of such counsellors there is no safety.

2. They are upbraided with the variety they had of such kind of people among them, *ver. 13.* They had their astrologers, or viewers of the heavens, that did not consider them, as David, to behold the wisdom and power of God in them; but under pretence of foretelling future events by them, they viewed the heavens, and forgot him that made them, and set their dominion on the earth, Job xxxviii. 33. and hath himself dominion over them, for he rides on the heavens. They had their star-gazers, who by the motions of the stars, their conjunctions and oppositions, read the doom of states and kingdoms. They had their monthly prognosticators, their almanac-makers, that told what weather it should be, or what news they should have, each month. The great stock they had of these was what they valued themselves much upon, but they were all cheats, and their art a sham. I confess, I see not how the judicial astrology, which some now pretend to, by the rules of which they undertake to prophecy concerning things to come, can be distinguished from that of the Chaldeans, and therefore how it can escape the censure and contempt which this text lays that under; yet, I fear, there are some who study their almanacs, and pay more regard to them and their prognostications than to their bibles and the prophecies there.

3. They are upbraided with the utter inability and insufficiency of all these pretenders to do them any kindness in the day of their distress. Let them see, whether with the help of their enchantments they can prevail against their enemies, or profit themselves, spirit their own forces, or dispirit those that come against them, *ver. 12.* Let them see what service those can do them who make a trade of divination, let them stand up, and either by their power save thee from these evils that are coming upon thee, or by their foresight make such a discovery of them beforehand, as that thou mayest by needful precautions save thyself; as Elisha, by notifying to the king of Israel the motions of the Syrian army, enabled him to save himself not once nor twice, 2 Kings vi. 10. This baffling of the diviners was literally fulfilled, when that night that Babylon was taken, and Belshazzar slain, all his astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men, were quite non-plussed with the hand-writing on the wall that pronounced the fatal sentence, *Dan. v. 8.*

4. They are upbraided with the fall of the wise men themselves in the common ruin, *ver. 14.* They are unlikely to stand their friends in any need, who cannot secure themselves; they are as stubble at the best, worthless and useless, and they shall be as stubble before a consuming fire. The Persians, to make room for their own wise men, will cut off those of Babylon, that fire shall burn them, and they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame. They can expect no other but to be devoured, who by their sins make themselves fuel to a devouring fire. When God kindles a fire among them, it shall not be a coal to warm at, and a fire to sit before, but a coal to burn them. Or rather, it notes that they should be utterly consumed by the judgments of God, burnt quite to ashes, and there shall not remain one live coal to do any body any service; for when God judgeth he will overcome.

Lastly, They are upbraided with their merchants, and those they dealt with, *ver. 15.* Such as they dealt with from their youth, either, (1.) In a way of consultation; these astrologers that dealt in the black art, they always loved to be dealing with, and they were in effect their merchants, fortune-telling, was one of the best trades in Babylon, and those that followed that trade, probably lived as great and got as much money as the richest merchants; yet when some of them were devoured, others ran their country, every one to his quarter, and there was none to save Babylon. Miserable comforters are they all. Or, (2.) In a way of commerce. As their astrologers sinned them with whom they had laboured, so did their merchants; they took care to secure their own effects, and then valued not what became of Babylon. They wandered every one to his own quarter, each man shifted for his own safety, but none would offer to lend a helping hand, no not to a city by which they had got so much money. Every one for himself, but few for his friends. The New Testament Babylon is lamented by the merchants that were made rich by her, but they very prudently stand afar off to lament her, *Rev. xviii. 15.* not willing to attempt any thing for her succour. Happy they, who by faith and prayer deal with one that will be a very present help in time of trouble.

C H A P. XLVIII.

God having in the foregoing chapter reckoned with the Babylonians, and shewed them their sins, and the desolation that was coming upon them for their sins, to shew that he bates sin wherever he finds it, and will not connive at it in his own people, comes, in this chapter, to shew the house of Jacob their sins, but withal, the mercy God had in store for them notwithstanding; and he therefore sets their sins in order before them, that by their repentance and reformation they might be prepared for that mercy. (1.) He chargeth them with hypocrisy in that which is good, and obstinacy in that which is evil, especially in their idolatry, notwithstanding the many convincing proofs God hath given them, that he is God alone, *ver. 1—8.* (2.) He assures them that their deliverance would be wrought purely for the sake of God's own name, and not for any merit of theirs, *ver. 9—11.* (3.) He encourageth them to depend purely upon God's power and promise for this deliverance, *ver. 12—15.* (4.) He shews them that as it was by their own sin that they brought themselves into captivity, so it would be only by the grace of God that they would obtain the necessary preparatives for their enlargement, *ver. 16—19.* (5.) He proclaims their release, yet with a proviso, that the wicked shall have no benefit by it, *ver. 20—22.*

1. **H**EAR ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah; which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. 2. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; the LORD of hosts is his name. 3. I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of thy mouth, and I shewed

them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. 4. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass: 5. I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image hath commanded them. 6. Thou hast heard, see all this: and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. 7. They are created now, and not from the beginning, even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them. 8. Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

We may here observe,

1. The hypocritical profession which many of the Jews made of religion and relation to God; to those who made such a profession, the prophet is here ordered to apply himself for their conviction and humiliation, that they might own God's justice in what he had brought upon them.

Now observe here,

(1.) How high their profession of religion soared, what a fair shew they made in the flesh, and how far they went towards heaven; what a good livery they wear, and what a good face they put upon a very bad heart. (1.) They were the house of Jacob, they had a place and a name in the visible church; Jacob have I loved, Jacob is God's chosen, and they are not only retainers to his family, but descendants from him. (2.) They were called by the name of Israel, an honourable name; they were of that people to whom pertained both the giving of the law and the promises. Israel signifies a prince with God, and they prided themselves in being of that princely race. (3.) They came forth out of the waters of Judah, and thence were called Jews, they were of the royal tribe, the tribe of which Shiloh was to come, the tribe that adhered to God when the rest revolted. (4.) They swore by the name of the Lord, and thereby owned him to be the true God, and their God, and gave glory to him as the righteous judge of all. They swore to the name of the Lord, so it may be read, they took an oath of allegiance to him as their king, and joined themselves to him in covenant. (5.) They made mention of the God of Israel in their prayers and praises, they often spoke of him, observed his memorials, and pretended to be very mindful of him. (6.) They called themselves of the holy city, and when they were captives in Babylon, purely from a principle of honour and jealousy for their native country, they valued themselves upon their interest in it. Many themselves that are unholly are proud of their relation to the church, the holy city. (7.) They staid themselves upon the God of Israel, and boasted of his promises, and his covenant with them. They leaned on the Lord, Mic. iii. 11. And if they were asked concerning their God, they could say, The Lord of hosts is his name, the Lord of all; happy we therefore, and very great, that have relation to him!

(2.) How low their profession of religion sunk for all this. It was all in vain, for it was all a jest; it was not in truth and righteousness: Their hearts were not true nor right in these professions. Note, All our religious professions avail nothing farther than they are made in truth in righteousness: if we be not sincere in them, we do but take the name of the Lord our God in vain.

2. The means God used, and the method he took to keep them close to himself, and to prevent their turning aside to idolatry. The many excellent laws he gave them, with their sanctions, and the hedges about them; it seems, would not serve to restrain them from that sin which did most easily beset them, and therefore to those God added remarkable prophecies, and remarkable providences in pursuance of those prophecies, which were all designed to convince them that their God was the only true God, and that it was therefore both their duty and interest to adhere to him.

(1.) He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable prophecies, *ver. 3.* I have declared the former things from the beginning. Nothing material happened to their nation from its original, but it was prophesied of before; their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance thence, the situation of the tribes in Canaan, &c. All these things went forth out of God's mouth, and he shewed them. Herein they were honoured above any nation, and even their curiosity gratified; their prophecies were such as they could rely upon, and such as concerned themselves and their own nation; and they were all verified by the accomplishment of them: I did them suddenly, when they were least expected by themselves or others, and therefore could not be foreseen by any but a divine prescience; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass; for what God doth, he doth effectually. These very calamities they were now groaning under in Babylon, God did from the beginning declare to them by Moses, as the certain consequences of their apostacy from God, *Lev. xxvi. 31, &c. and Deut. xxviii. 36, &c.—xxix. 28.* He also declared to them their return to God, and to their own land again, *Deut. xxx. 4, &c. Lev. xxvi. 44, 45.* Thus he shewed them how he would deal with them long before it came to pass. Let them compare their present state, together with the deliverance they had now in prospect, with what was written in the law, and they would find the scripture exactly fulfilled.

(2.) He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable providences, *ver. 6.* I have shewed the new things from this time. Besides the general view given from the beginning of God's proceedings with them, he shewed them new things by the prophets of their own day, and created them; they were hidden things which they could not otherwise know, as the prophecy concerning Cyrus, and the exact time of their release out of Babylon; these things God created new. Their restoration was in effect their creation, and they had a promise of it not from the beginning, but of late, for to prevent their apostacy from God, or to recover them, prophecy was kept up among them. Yet it was told them when they could not come to the knowledge of it any other way than by divine revelation. Consider (saith God) how much soever it is talked of now among you and expected, it was told you by the prophets, when it was the farthest thing in your thoughts, when you had not heard it, when you had not known it, nor had any reason to expect it, and when your ear was not opened concerning it, *ver. 7, 8.* when the thing seemed utterly impossible, and you would scarce have given any one the hearing that should have told you of it. God had shewed them hidden things, which were out of the reach of their knowledge, and done for their great things, out of the reach of their power; now, saith he, *ver. 6.* Thou hast heard, see all this: Thou hast heard the prophecy, see the accomplishment of it, and observe whether the word and works of God do not exactly agree, and will ye not declare it? That as you have heard, so you have seen? Will ye

you not own the Lord is the true God, the only true God, that he has that knowledge and power which no creature has, and which none of the gods of the nations can pretend to? Will you not own that your God hath been a good God to you? Declare this to his honour and your own shame, who have dealt so deceitfully with him, and preferred others before him.

3. The reasons why God would take this method with them.

1. Because he would anticipate their boastings of themselves and their idols. (1.) God by his prophets told them beforehand of their deliverance, *lest they should attribute the doing of it to their idols*. Thus he saw it necessary to secure the glory of it to himself, which otherwise would have been given by some of them to their graven images; I spoke of it (saith God) *lest thou shouldst say, Mine idol hath done it, or hath commanded to be done*, ver. 5. There were those that would be apt to say so, and so would be confirmed in their idolatry by that which was intended to cure them of it. But they would now be for ever precluded from saying this; for if the idols had done it, the prophets of the idols would have foretold it; but the prophets of the Lord having foretold it, no doubt it was the power of the Lord that effected it. (2.) God foretold it by his prophets, *lest they should assume the foresight of it to themselves*. Those that were not so prophane as to ascribe the thing itself to an idol, yet were so proud as to have pretended that by their own sagacity they foresaw it, if God had not been before-hand with them and spoken first, *lest thou shouldst say, Behold I knew them*. Thus vain men that would be thought wise, commonly undervalue a thing which is really great and surprising with this suggestion, that it was no more than they expected, and they knew it would come to this. To anticipate this, and that this boasting might be for ever excluded, God told them of it, before the day, when as yet they dreamed not of it. God has said and done enough to prevent men's boastings of themselves, and that *no flesh may glory in his presence*, which if it have not the intended effect, it will aggravate the sin and ruin of the proud, and sooner or later every mouth shall be stopped, and all flesh shall become silent before God.

2. Because he would leave them inexcusable in their obstinacy. Therefore he took this pains with them because he knew they were obstinate, ver.

4. He knew they were so obstinate and perverse, that if he had not supported the doctrine of providence by prophecy, they would have had the impudence to deny it, and would have said, their idols had done that which God did. He knew very well (1.) How wilful they would be, and how fully bent they would be upon that which is evil. *I knew that thou wast hard*, so the word is; there were prophecies as well as precepts, which God gave them because of the hardness of their hearts. *Thy neck is an iron sinew*, unapt to yield, and submit to the yoke of God's commandments, unapt to turn, and look back upon his dealings with thee, or look up to his displeasure against thee; not flexible to the will of God, nor pliable to his intentions; not manageable by his word or providence. *Thy brow is brass*, i. e. thou art impudent, and canst not blush, insolent, and wilt not fear or give back, but thrust on in the way of thine heart. God useth means to bring sinners to comply with him, though he knows they are obstinate. (2.) How deceitful they would be, and insincere in that which is good, ver. 8. God sent his prophets to them, but they did not hear, they would not know, and it was no more than was expected, considering what they had been, thou wast called, and not miscalled, a *transgressor from the womb*. Ever since they were first formed into a people they were prone to idolatry; they brought with them out of Egypt a strange addictedness to that sin; and they were murmurers as soon as ever they began their march to Canaan. They were justly upbraided with it then, *Deut. ix. 7-24*. Therefore *I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously*. God foresaw their apostasy, and gave this reason for it, that he had always found them false and fickle, *Deut. xxxi. 16-27-29*. This is applicable to particular persons, we are all born children of disobedience, were called *transgressors from the womb*, and therefore it is easy to foresee that we will deal treacherously, very treacherously. Where original sin is, actual sin will follow of course. God knows it, and yet deals not with us according to our deserts.

9. ¶ For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. 10. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. 11. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake; will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another. 12. ¶ Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. 13. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. 14. All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? the LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. 15. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

1. The deliverance of God's people out of their captivity in Babylon, was a thing upon many accounts so improbable, that there was need of line upon line, for the encouragement of the faith and hope of God's people concerning it. Two things were discouraging to them; their own unworthiness that God should do it for them; and the many difficulties in the thing itself; now in these verses both these discouragements are removed, for, here is,

1. A reason why God would do it for them, though they were unworthy: not for their sake, be it known to them, but for his name's sake, his own sake, ver. 9, 10, 11.

(1.) It is true they had been very provoking, and God had been justly angry with them, their captivity was the punishment of their iniquity; and if when he had been in Babylon, he had left them to pine away and perish there, and made the desolations of their country perpetual, he had but dealt with them according to their sins, and it was what such a sinful people might expect from an angry God; but, saith God, *I will defer mine anger*, or rather *stifle and suppress it*, I will make it appear I am slow to wrath, and will refrain from thee, not pour upon thee what I justly might, that I should cut thee off from being a people. And why will God thus stay his hand? For my name's sake; because that people was called by his name, and made profession of his name; and if they were cut off, the enemies would blaspheme his name: It is for my praise; because it would redound to the honour of his mercy, to spare and relieve them; and if he continued them to be to him a people, they might be to him for a name and a praise.

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(2.) It is true, they were very corrupt and ill disposed, but God would himself refine them, and make them fit for the mercy he intended for them; *I have refined thee*, that thou mightest be made a vessel of honour. Though he doth not find them meet for his favour, he will make them so. And this accounts for his bringing them into the trouble, and continuing them in it so long as he did, it was not to cut them off, but to do them good: It was to refine them, but not with silver, or with silver, not so thoroughly as men refine their silver, which they continue in the furnace till all the dross is separated from it; but if God should take that course with them, they would be always in the furnace, for they are all dross, and as such might justly be put away, *Psal. cxiv. 119*. as reprobate silver, *Jer. vi. 30*. He therefore takes them as they are, refined in part only, and not thoroughly. *I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction*, i. e. made thee a choice one by the good which the affliction has done thee, and then designed thee for great things. Many have been brought home to God as chosen vessels, and a good work of grace been begun in them in the furnace of affliction. Affliction is no bar to God's choice, but subservient to his purpose.

(3.) It is true they could not pretend to merit at God's hand so great a favour as their deliverance out of Babylon, which would put such an honour upon them, and bring them so much joy, therefore, saith God, *For my own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it*; ver. 11. See how the emphasis is laid upon that, for it is a reason that cannot fail, and therefore the resolution grounded upon it cannot fall to the ground. God will do it, not because he owes them such a favour, but to save the honour of his own name, that they may not be polluted by the insolent triumphs of the heathen, who in triumphing over Israel thought they triumphed over the God of Israel, and imagined their gods were too hard for him. This was plainly the language of Belshazzar's revels, when he prophaned the holy vessels of God's temple at the same time when he praised his idols, *Dan. v. 2*. and of the Babylonians demand, *Psal. cxxxvii. 3*. *Sing us one of the songs of Zion*. God will therefore deliver his people, because he will not suffer his glory to be thus given to another. Moses pleaded, this often with God, Lord, *What will the Egyptians say?* Note, God is jealous for the honour of his own name, and will not suffer the wrath of man to proceed any farther than he will make it turn to his praise. And it is matter of comfort to God's people, that whatever comes of them, God will secure his own honour; and, as far as is necessary to that, God will work deliverance for them.

2. Here is proof that God could do it for them, though they were unable to help themselves, and the thing seemed altogether impracticable. Let Jacob and Israel hearken to this, and believe it, and take the comfort of it. They are God's called, called according to his purpose, called by him out of Egypt, *110f. xi. 1*. and now out of Babylon, a people whom with a distinguishing favour he calleth by name, and calls to; they are his called, for they are called to him, called by his name, and called his. And therefore he will look after them; and they may be assured, that as he will deliver them for his own sake, so he will deliver them by his own strength; they need not fear then, for.

1. He is God alone, and the eternal God, ver. 12. *I am he*, that can do what I will, and will do what is best; he whom none can compare with, much less contend with; *I am the first, I also am the last*. Who can be too quick for him that is the first, or prevent him? Who can be too hard for him that is the last, and will keep the field against all opposers; and will reign till they are all made his footstool? What room then is left to doubt of their deliverance, when he undertakes it; whose designs cannot but be all well laid, for he is the first; and well executed, for he is the last; as for this God, his work is perfect.

2. He is the God that made the world, and he that did that can do any thing, ver. 13. Look we down, we see the earth firm under us, and feel it so; it was his hand that laid the foundation of it; look we up, we see the heavens spread out as a canopy over our heads, and it was his hand that spread them, that spanned them, that stretched them out, and did it by an exact measure, as the workman sometimes metes out his work by spans. This intimates that God hath a vast reach, and can compass designs of the greatest extent. *If the palm of his right hand*, (so the margin reads it) hath gone so far as to stretch out the heavens, what will he do with his out-stretched arm? Yet this is not all; he hath not only made the heavens and the earth, and therefore he in whom our hope and help is, is omnipotent, *Psal. cxxiv. 8*. but he hath the command of all the hosts of both; when he calls them into his service, to go on his errand, they stand up together, they come at the call, they answer to their names. Here we are, What wilt thou have us to do? They stand up, not only in reverence to their Creator, but in readiness to execute his orders; they stand up together unanimously, concurring and helping one another in the service of their Maker. Therefore if God will deliver his people, he cannot be to seek for instruments to be employed in it.

3. He hath already foretold it, and having such an infinite knowledge that he could foresee it, no doubt he has an almighty power to effect it. All ye of the house of Jacob, assemble yourselves and hear this for your comfort: Which among them, among the gods of the heathen, or their wife men, hath declared these things, or could declare them? ver. 14. They had no foresight of them at all, but those who consulted them were very confident that Babylon should be a lady for ever; and Israel a perpetual slave; and their oracles did not give them the least hint to the contrary, to undeceive them; whereas God by his prophets had given notice to the Jews long before their captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem; as he had now likewise given them notice of their release, ver. 15. *I, even I, have spoken*; and he would not have spoken it, if he could not have made it good: none could out-see him, and therefore we may be sure none could outdo him.

4. The person is pitched upon that is to be employed in this service, and the measures concerted in the divine counsels which are unalterable: Cyrus is the man that must do it; and it tends much to strengthen our assurance that a thing shall be done, when we are particularly informed how and by whom. It is not left at uncertainty who shall do it, but a matter is fixed: (1.) It is one whom God is well pleased in, upon this account, because he is designed for this service, *The Lord has loved him*, ver. 14. i. e. he has done him this favour, this honour, to make him an instrument of the redemption of his people, and therein a type of the great Redeemer, God's beloved Son in whom he was well pleased. Those God doth a great kindness to, and has a great kindness for, whom he makes serviceable to his church. (2.) It is one whom God will give authority and commission to; *I have called him*, have given him a sufficient warrant, and therefore will bear him out. (3.) It is one whom God will by a series of providences lead to this service; *I have brought him*, from a far country, brought him to engage against Babylon, brought him step by step quite beyond his own intentions. Whom God calls he will bring, will cause them to come, (so the word is) to come at the call. (4.) It is one whom God will own and give success to: Cyrus will do God's pleasure on Babylon, that which it is his pleasure should be done, and which he will be pleased with the doing of, though Cyrus has ends of his own to serve, and hath no regard either to the will of God, or

to his favour in the doing of it. *His arm*, i. e. Cyrus's army, and in it God's arm *shall* come and *be upon* the Chaldeans, to bring them down, *ver.* 14. for if God call him, and bring him, he will certainly *make his way prosperous*, *ver.* 15. Then we may hope to prosper in our way, when we follow a divine call and conduct.

16. ¶ Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the LORD GOD, and his Spirit hath sent me. 17. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go. 18. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: 19. Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels, like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off, nor destroyed from before me. 20. ¶ Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it *even* to the end of the earth; say ye, the LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob. 21. And they thirsted not *when* he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. 22. *There is no peace*, saith the LORD unto the wicked.

Here as before, Jacob and Israel are summoned to hearken to the prophet speaking in God's name, or rather to God speaking in and by the prophet, and that as a type of the great Prophet, by whom God has in these last days spoken unto us and that is sufficient; *Come ye near* therefore and *hear this*. Note, Those that would hear and understand what God saith, must come near and approach to him; let them come as near as they can; let those that have hearkened to the tempter now come near, and hear this, that they may be confirmed in their resolutions to serve God. Those that draw nigh to God may depend upon this, that his secret shall be with them.

Here, 1. God refers them to what he had both said to them and done for them formerly, which if they would reflect upon, they might from thence fetch great encouragement to trust in God at this time. (1.) He had always spoken plainly to them, *from the beginning*, by Moses and all the prophets; *I have not spoken in secret*, but publicly, from the top of mount Sinai, and in the chief places of concourse, the solemn assemblies of their tribes; he did not deliver his oracles obscurely and ambiguously, but so as they might be understood, *Hab. ii. 2.* (2.) He had always acted wonderfully for them, *from the time that it was* that they were first formed into a people, *there am I*, there have I been resident among them, and presiding in their affairs; he sent them prophets, raised them up judges, and frequently appeared for them. And therefore there I will be still. He that has been with his people hitherto will be to the end.

2. The prophet himself, as a type of the great Prophet, asserts his own commission to deliver this message; *Now the Lord God* (the same that spoke from the beginning, and did not speak in secret) *hath by his Spirit sent me*, *ver.* 16. The Spirit of God is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father and Son, and having a divine authority to send prophets. Note, Whom God sends the Spirit sends. Those whom God commissions for any service the Spirit in some measure qualifies for it; and those may speak boldly, and must be heard obediently, whom God and his Spirit send. As that which the prophet saith to the same purpose with this, *Isa. lxi. 1.* is applied to Christ, *Luke iv. 21.* so may this be; the Lord God sent him, and had the Spirit without measure.

3. God by the prophet sends them a gracious message for their support and comfort under their affliction. The preface to this message is both awful and encouraging, *ver.* 17. *Thus saith Jehovah*, the eternal God, *thy Redeemer*, that hath often been so, that hath engaged to be so, and will be faithful to the engagement, for he is *the Holy One*, that cannot deceive, *the Holy One of Israel*, that will not deceive them. The same words that introduce the law, and give authority to that, introduce the promise, and give validity to that; *I am the Lord thy God*, whom thou mayest depend upon, as in relation to thee, and in covenant with thee.

1. Here is the good work God undertakes to fulfil in them; he that is their Redeemer, in order to that will be, (1.) Their instructor; *I am thy God that teacheth thee to profit*, he teacheth thee such things as are profitable for thee, things that belong to thy peace. By this God shews himself to be a God in covenant with us, by his teaching us, *Heb. viii. 10, 11.* and none teacheth like him, for he gives an understanding. Whom God redeems he teacheth; whom he designs to deliver out of their afflictions, he first teacheth to profit by their afflictions, makes them partakers of his holiness; for that is the profit for which he chastens us, *Heb. xii. 10.* (2.) Their guide; *He leads them to the way*, and in the way by which they should go; he not only enlightens their eyes, but directs their steps; by his grace he leads them in the way of duty, by his providence he leads them in the way of deliverance, Happy they, that are under such a conduct.

2. Here is the good-will God declares he has for them, by his good wishes concerning them, *ver.* 18, 19. He had indeed brought them into captivity, but it was along of themselves, nor did he afflict them willingly. (1.) As when he gave them this law, he earnestly wished they might be obedient, *O that there were such a heart in them*, *Deut. v. 29.* *O that they were wise!* *Deut. xxxii. 29.* So, when he had punished them for the breach of his law, he wished they had been obedient; *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!* as *Psal. lxxxii. 13.* *O that my people had hearkened unto me!* This confirms what God hath said and sworn, that he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners. (2.) He assures them that if they had been obedient, that would not only have prevented their captivity, but would have advanced and perpetuated their prosperity. He had abundance of good things ready to bestow upon them, if their sins had not turned them away, *chap. lix. 1, 2.* (1.) They should have been carried on in a constant, uninterrupted stream of prosperity; *Thy peace should have been as a river*; thou shouldst have enjoyed a series of mercies, one continually following another, as the waters of a river which always last; *Labitur, & labetur in omne volubilis ævum*; not like the waters of a land-flood, which are soon gone. (2.) Their virtue and honour, and the justice of their cause, should in all cases have borne down opposition by their own strength, *as the waves of the sea*, such should their righteousness have been, nothing should have stood before it: Whereas now they have been disobedient, the current of their prosperity was in-

terrupted, and their righteousness overpowered. (3.) The rising generation should have been very numerous, and very prosperous; whereas they were now very few, as appears by the small number of the returning captives, *Ezra ii. 64.* not so many as of one tribe when they came out of Egypt; they should have been *numberless as the sand*, according to the promise, *Gen. xxii. 17.* which they had forfeited the benefit of: The offspring of thy bowels had been innumerable like the gravel of the sea, if thy righteousness had been irresistible and unconquerable as the waves of the sea. (4.) The honour of Israel had still been unstained, untouched; *His name should not have been cut off*, as now it is in the land of Israel, which is either desolate or inhabited by strangers; nor should it have been *destroyed from before God*: And we cannot reckon the name either of a family or of a kingdom destroyed, till it is destroyed from before God, till it ceaseth to be a name in his holy place. Now God tells them thus what he would have done for them, if they had persevered in their obedience. (1.) That they might be the more humbled for their sins, by which they had forfeited such rich mercies. Note, This should engage us, I might say, enrage us against sin, that it has not only lost us the good things we have enjoyed, but prevented the good things God had in store for us. It will make the misery of the disobedient the more intolerable, to think how happy they might have been. (2.) That his mercy might appear the more illustrious in working deliverance and salvation for them, though they had forfeited it, and rendered themselves unworthy of it. Nothing but a prerogative of mercy would have saved them.

3. Here is assurance given of the great work which God designed to work for them, even their salvation out of their captivity, when he had accomplished his work in them.

1. Here is a commission granted them to leave Babylon; God proclaimed it long before Cyrus did, that whoever would might return to his own land, *ver.* 20. You have a full discharge sent you, *Go ye forth out of Babylon*; the prison doors are thrown open, and the trumpet sounded, proclaiming a release. Perhaps, with this word, as a means, the Spirit of the Lord stirred up the spirits of those that did take the benefit of Cyrus's proclamation, *Ezra i. 5.* *Flee ye from the Chaldeans*, not with an ignominious, stolen flight, as Jacob fled from Laban, but flee with an holy disdain, as scorning to stay any longer among them; flee ye, not silently and frowardly, but with a voice, with a voice of singing, as they fled of old out of Egypt, *Exod. xv. 11.*

2. Here is the news of this sent to all parts; let it be declared, let it be told; let it be uttered, make it to be heard by the most remote, by the most remote, send the tidings of it, by word of mouth, send it by writing from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, even the utmost regions, *to the ends of the earth*. This was a figure of the publishing of the gospel to all the world; but that brings glad tidings which all the world is concerned in, this only that which it is fit all should take notice of, that they may be invited by it to forsake their idols, and come into the service of the God of Israel. Let them all know then,

(1.) That those whom God owns for his, are such as he has dearly bought and paid for; *The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob*; he has done it formerly, when he brought them out of Egypt, and now he is about to do it again. Jacob was God's servant, and therefore he redeemed him: for what had other masters to do with God's servants? Israel is God's son, therefore Pharaoh must let him go. God redeemed Jacob, and therefore it was fit he should be his servant, *Psal. cxvi. 16.* the bonds God had loosed, tied them the faster to him. He that redeemed us, has an unquestionable right to us.

(2.) That those whom God designs to bring home to himself he will take care of, that they want not for the necessary expences of their journey; when he brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the deserts, *ver.* 21. they thirsted not, *ver.* 21. for in all their removes the water out of the rock followed them; thence he caused the waters to flow; and since rock-water is the clearest and finest, God clave the rock, and the waters gushed out; for he can fetch in necessary supplies for his people the way that they think least likely. This refers to what he did for them when he brought them out of Egypt; when all this was literally true; but it should now be in effect done again in their return out of Babylon, so well provided for shall they and their's be in their return. And God doth his work as effectually by marvellous providences as by miracles, though perhaps they be not so much taken notice of. This is applicable to those treasures of grace laid up for us in Jesus Christ, from which all good flows to us as the water did to Israel out of the rock, for that rock is Christ.

(3.) Here is a caveat put in against the wicked, that go on still in their trespasses, let not them think to have any benefit among God's people, though in shew and profession they herd themselves among them; let them not expect to come in sharers; no, *ver.* 22. though God's thoughts concerning the body of that people were thoughts of peace, yet those among them that were wicked and hated to be reformed, to them *there is no peace*, no peace with God or their own consciences; no, no real good, whatever is pretended to. What have they to do with peace that are enemies to God? Their false prophets cried peace to them to whom it did not belong; but God tells them there shall be no peace, nor nothing like it, to the wicked. The quarrel sinners have commenced with God, if not taken up in time by repentance, will be an everlasting quarrel.

C H A P. XLIX.

Glorious things had been spoken in the chapters before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon; but lest any should think when it was accomplished, that it looked much greater and brighter in the prophecy than in the performance, and that the return of about forty thousand Jews in a poor condition out of Babylon to Jerusalem, was not an event sufficiently answering the height and grandeur of the expressions used in the prophecy, he here comes to shew that the prophecy had a further intention, and was to have its full accomplishment in a redemption that should as far out-do these expressions as the other seemed to come short of them; even the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of whom not only Cyrus that was God's servant in working the Jews' deliverance, but Isaiah too that was God's servant in foretelling it, was a type. In this chapter we have, (1.) This designation of Christ, under the type of Isaiah, in his office as Mediator, *ver.* 1—3. (2.) The assurances given him of the success of his undertaking among the Gentiles, *ver.* 3—8. (3.) The redemption that should be wrought by him, and the progress of that redemption, *ver.* 9—12. (4.) The encouragement given from hence to the afflicted church, *ver.* 13—17. (5.) The addition of many to it, and the setting out of a church among the Gentiles, *ver.* 18—23. (6.) A ratification of the prophecy of the Jews' release out of Babylon, which was to be the figure and type of all the blessings, *ver.* 24—26. And if this chapter be rightly understood, we shall see ourselves to be more concerned in the prophecies relating to the Jews' deliverance out of Babylon than we thought we were.

1. LISTEN

1. **L**ISTEN, O isles, unto me; and hearken ye people from far: The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. 2. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft: in his quiver hath he hid me; 3. And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. 4. Then I said, I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God. 5. ¶ And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. 6. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Here, 1. An auditory is summoned together, and attention demanded: the sermon in the chapter before was directed to the house of Jacob and the people of Israel, *ver.* 1—12. But this is directed to the isles, *i. e.* the Gentiles, for they are called the isles of the Gentiles, *Gen. x. 5.* and to the people from far, that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and afar off. Let these listen, *ver.* 1. as to a thing at a distance, which yet they were to hear with desire and attention. Note, 1. The tidings of a Redeemer are sent to the Gentiles, and to those that lay most remote, and they are concerned to listen to them. The Gentiles listened to the gospel, when the Jews were deaf to it.

2. The great author and publisher of the redemption produceth his authority from heaven for the work he had undertaken. (1.) God had appointed him, and set him apart for it; *The Lord hath called me from the womb to this office, and made mention of my name,* nominated me to be the Saviour; by an angel he called him Jesus, a Saviour, who should save his people from their sins, *Matth. i. 21.* Nay, from the womb of the divine counsels before all worlds he was called to his service, and help was laid upon him; and he came at the call for he said, *Lo, I come,* with an eye to what was written of him in the volume of the book. This was said of some of the prophets, as types of him, *Jer. i. 5.* Paul was separated to the apostleship from his mother's womb, *Gal. i. 15.* (1.) God had fitted and qualified him for the service to which he designed him; he made his mouth like a sharp sword, and made him like a polished shaft, or a bright arrow; furnished with every thing necessary to fight God's battles against the powers of darkness, to conquer Satan, and reduce God's revolted subjects to their allegiance, by his word, that is the two-edged sword, *Heb. iv. 12.* which comes out of his mouth, *Rev. xix. 15.* The convictions of the word are the arrows that shall be sharp in the hearts of sinners, *Psal. xlv. 5.* (3.) God had preferred him to the service for which he had reserved him; he hath hid me in the shadow of his hand, and in his quiver, which notes, (1.) Concealment: the gospel of Christ, and the calling in of the Gentiles by it was long hid from ages and generations, hid in God, *Eph. iii. 5.* *Rom. xvi. 25.* hid in the shadow of the ceremonial law, and the Old Testament types. (2.) Protection: the house of David was the particular care of the divine providence, because that blessing was in it. Christ in his infancy, was sheltered from the rage of Herod. (4.) God had owned him; had said unto him, *Thou art my servant,* whom I have employed, and will succeed; thou art Israel in effect, the prince with God, that had wrestled and prevailed, and in him I will be glorified. The people of God are Israel, and they are all gathered together, and summed up as it were in Christ, the great representative of all Israel, as the high priest who had the names of all the tribes on his breast-plate; and in him God is and will be glorified; so he said by a voice from heaven, *John xii. 27, 28.* Some read the words in two clauses, *thou art my servant,* (so Christ is, *chap. xlii. 1.*) *It is Israel in whom I will be glorified by thee;* it is the spiritual Israel, the elect, in the salvation of whom by Jesus Christ God will be glorified; and his free grace for ever admired.

3. He is assured of the good success of his undertaking; for whom God calls, he will prosper. And as to this,

1. He objects the discouragement he had met with at his first setting out, *ver. 4.* Then I said with a sad heart, *I have laboured in vain;* those that were ignorant and careless, and strangers to God, are so still; *I have called and they have refused,* have stretched out my hands to a gainsaying people: this was Isaiah's complaint, but it was no more than he was bid to expect, *chap. vi. 9.* And the same was a temptation to Jeremiah to resolve he would labour no more, *Jer. xx. 9.* It is the complaint of many a faithful minister, that has not loitered but laboured, not spared but spent his strength, and himself with it; and yet as to many it was all in vain and for nought, they will not be prevailed with to repent and believe. But here it seems to point at the obduracy of the Jews, among whom Christ went in person preaching the gospel of the kingdom, laboured and spent his strength, and yet the rulers and the body of the nation rejected him and his doctrine; so very few were brought in, when one would have thought none should have stood out, that he might well say, *I have laboured in vain,* preached so many sermons, wrought so many miracles in vain. Let not the ministers think it strange that they are slighted, when the master himself was.

(2.) He comforts himself under this discouragement with this consideration, that it was the cause of God in which he was engaged, and the call of God that engaged him in it; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, who is the Judge of all, and my work with my God, whose servant I am. His comfort is, and it may be the comfort of all faithful ministers, when they see little success of their labours, (1.) That however it be, it is a righteous cause that they are pleading, they are with God, and for God, they are on his side, and workers together with him. They like not their judgment, the rule they go by, nor their work, the business they are employed in, ever the worse for this; the unbelief of men gives them no cause to suspect the truth of their doctrine, *Rom. iii. 3.* (2.) That their management of this cause, and their prosecution of this work was known to God, and they could appeal to him concerning their sincerity, and that it was not through any neglect of theirs that they laboured in vain; he knows the way that I take, my judgment with the Lord, to determine whether I have not delivered my soul, and left the blood of them that perish on their own heads. (3.) Though the labour be in vain as to those that were laboured with, yet not as to the labourer himself, if he be faithful; the

judgment is with the Lord, who will justify and hear him out, though men condemn him and run him down; and his work, *i. e.* the reward of his work, is with his God, who will take care he will be no loser, no, not by his lost labour. (4.) Though the judgment be not yet brought forth unto victory, nor the work to perfection, yet both are with the Lord, to carry them on, and succeed them, according to his purpose in his own way and time.

3. He receives from God a farther answer to this objection, *ver. 5, 6.* He knew very well that God had set him on work, had formed him from the womb to be his servant, not only called him so early to it, *ver. 1.* but began so early to fit him for it, and dispose him to it. Those whom God designs to employ as his servants he is fashioning and preparing them to be so long before, when perhaps neither themselves nor others are aware of it; it is he that formeth the spirit of man within him. Christ was to be his servant to bring Jacob again to him, that had treacherously departed from him; the seed of Jacob therefore according to the flesh, must first be dealt with, and means used to bring them back; Christ and the word of salvation by him are sent to them first, nay, Christ comes in person to them only, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but what if Jacob will not be brought back to God, and Israel will not be gathered? so it proved; but this is a satisfaction in that case.

1. Christ will be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and those are truly glorious that are so in God's eyes. Though few of the Jew nation were converted by Christ's preaching and miracles, and many of them loaded him with ignominy and disgrace, yet God put honour upon him and made him glorious, at his baptism, in his transfiguration, spoke to him from heaven, sent angels to minister to him, made even his shameful death glorious by the many prodigies that attended it, much more his resurrection; In his sufferings God was his strength, so that though he met with all the discouragement imaginable, by the contempts of a people whom he had done so much to oblige, yet he did not fail, nor was discouraged: An angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, *Luke xxii. 43.* Faithful ministers, though they see not the fruit of their labours, yet they shall be accepted of God, and in that they shall be truly glorious, for his favour is our honour; and they shall be assisted to proceed and persevere in their labours notwithstanding. This weakens their hands, but their God will be their strength.

2. The gospel shall be glorious in the eyes of the world; though it be not so in the eyes of the Jews, yet it shall be entertained by the nations, *ver. 6.* The Messiah seemed as if he had been primarily designed to bring Jacob back, *ver. 5.* But he is here told that is comparatively but a small matter; a higher orb of honour than that, and a larger sphere of usefulness are designed him: *It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob to the dignity and dominion they expect by the Messiah, and to restore the preserved of Israel, and make them a flourishing church and state as formerly;* nay, considering what a little handful of people they are, it would be but a small matter in comparison, for the Messiah to be the Saviour of them only; and therefore, *I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles,* many great and mighty nations by the gospel of Christ shall be brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God; that thou mayest be my salvation, the author of that salvation which I have designed for lost man, and this to the end of the earth, to nations at the greatest distance. Hence Simeon learned to call Christ a light to lighten the Gentiles, *Luke i. 32.* and St. Paul's exposition of this text is what we ought to abide by, and it serves for a key to the context, *Acts xiii. 47.* Therefore, saith he, we turn to the Gentiles, to preach the gospel to them, because so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, *I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles.* In this the Redeemer was truly glorious, though Israel was not gathered; the setting up of his kingdom in the Gentile world was more to his honour, than if he had raised up all the tribes of Jacob. This promise is in part fulfilled already, and will have a farther accomplishment, if that time be yet to come which the apostle speaks of, when the fullness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. Observe, God calls it his salvation, which some think intimates how well pleased he was with it, how he gloried in it, and (if I may so say) how much his heart was upon it. And farther observe, that Christ is given for a light to all those to whom he is given for salvation: It is in darkness that men perish, Christ enlighten men's eyes, and so makes them holy and happy.

7. Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. 8. Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; 9. That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. 10. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. 11. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. 12. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north, and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

In these verses we have,

1. The humiliation and exaltation of the Messiah, *ver. 7.* The Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and Israel's Holy One, that had always taken care of the Jewish church, and wrought out for them those deliverances that were typical of the great salvation, speaks here to him who was the undertaker of that salvation. And, (1.) He takes notice of his humiliation, the instances of which were uncommon; nay, they were unparalleled: He was one whom man despised, *Isa. liii. 2.* he is despised and rejected of men. To be despised by some a creature, a man that is himself a worm, speaks the lowest and most contemptible condition imaginable. Man, whom he came to save and to put honour upon, yet despised him, and put contempt upon him; so wretchedly ungrateful were his persecutors. The ignominy he underwent was not the least of his sufferings: Nay, they not only made him despicable, but odious, he was one whom the nation abhorred; they treated him as the worst of men, and cried out, Crucify him, crucify him. The nation did it, the Gentiles as well as Jews, and the Jews herein worse than Gentiles; for his cross was to the one a stumbling block, and to the other foolishness. He was a servant of rulers, he was trampled upon, abused, scourged, and crucified as a slave,

a slave. Pilate boasted of his power over him, *John* xix. 10. This he submitted to for our salvation. (2.) He promiseth him his exaltation: honour was done him, even in the depth of his humiliation. Herod the king stood in awe of him, saying, it is John the Baptist; noblemen, rulers, centurions, came and kneeled to him; but this was more fully accomplished when kings should receive his gospel, and submit to his yoke, and join in the worship of him, and call themselves the vassals of Christ. Not that Christ values the rich more than the poor, they stand upon a level with him, but it is for the honour of his kingdom among men, when the great ones of the earth appear for him and do homage to him. This shall be the accomplishment of God's promise, that he will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and therefore it shall be done *because of the Lord that is faithful* and true to his promise; and it shall be an evidence that Christ had a commission for what he did, and that God had chosen him, and would own the choice he had made.

2. The blessings he hath in store for all those to whom he made salvation. 1. God will own and stand by him in his undertaking, *ver. 8, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, i. e. I will hear thee; Christ in the days of his flesh offered up strong cries, and was heard, Heb. v. 7.* He knew that the Father heard him always, *John* xl. 42. heard him for himself, for though the cup might not pass from him, yet he was enabled to drink it; heard him for all that are his, and therefore he interceded for them as one having authority, *Father, I will, John* xvii. 4. And all our happiness results from the Son's interest in the Father, and the prevalency of his intercession, that he always heard him; and this makes the gospel-time an acceptable time, welcome to us, because we are accepted of God, both reconciled and recommended to him, that God hears the Redeemer for us, *Heb. vii. 25.* Nor will he hear him only, but help him to go through with his undertaking. The Father was always with him at his right hand, and did not leave him when his disciples did. Violent attacks were made upon our Lord Jesus by the powers of darkness, when it was their hour to have driven him off from his undertakings, but God promiseth to preserve him, and enable him to persevere in it; on that *one stone was seven eyes, Zech. iii. 9.* God would preserve him, *i. e. would preserve his interest; his kingdom amongst men though sought against on all sides. Christ is preserved while Christianity is.*

2. God will authorize him to apply to his church the benefits of the redemption he is to work out, God's preserving and helping him was to make the day of his gospel a day of salvation. And so the apostle understands it, behold now is the day of salvation, now the word of reconciliation by Christ is preached, *2 Cor. vi. 2.*

1. He shall be guarantee of the treaty of peace between God and man. I will give thee for a covenant of the people. This we had before, *chap. xlii. 6.* and it is here repeated as faithful and well worthy of all acceptance and observation. He is given for a covenant, *i. e. for a pledge of all the blessings of the covenant,* it was in him that God was reconciling the world to himself, and he that spared not his Son will deny us nothing. He is given for a covenant, not as he is the Mediator of the covenant, the blessed Day's-man that hath laid his hand upon us both, but as he is all in all in the covenant: all the duty of the covenant is summed up in our being his; and all the privilege and happiness of the covenant is summed up in his being ours.

2. He shall repair the decays of the church, and build it upon a rock. He shall establish the earth, or rather the land, the land of Judah, a type of the church; he shall cause the desolate heritages to be inherited; so the cities of Judah were after the return out of captivity; and so the church that in the last and degenerate ages of the Jewish nation had been as a country laid waste, but was again replenished by the fruits of the preaching of the gospel.

3. He shall free the souls of men from the bondage of guilt and corruption, and bring them into the glorious liberty of God's children. He shall say to the prisoners that were bound over to the justice of God, and bound under the power of Satan, *go forth, ver. 9.* Pardoning mercy is a release from the curse of the law, and renewing grace is a release from the dominion of sin; both are from Christ, and are branches of the great salvation, it is he that saith, *go forth;* and it is the Son that makes us free, and then we are freed indeed. He saith to them that are in darkness, *Shew yourselves;* not only see but be seen, to the glory of God, and your own comfort. When he discharged the lepers from their confinement, he said, *Go shew yourselves to the priest; when we see the light, let our light shine.*

4. He shall provide for the comfortable passage of those whom he sets at liberty, to the place of their rest and happy settlement, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* which refers to the provision made for the Jews returning out of their captivity, who were taken under the particular care of the divine providence, as favourites of heaven, and now so in a special manner; but it is applicable to that conduct of divine grace which all God's spiritual Israel are under from their release out of bondage, to their settlement in the heavenly Canaan. (1.) They shall have their charges borne, and shall be fed on free cost with food convenient; *they shall feed on the ways, as sheep, for now as formerly God leadeth Joseph like a flock.* When God pleaseth even highway ground shall be good ground for the sheep of his pasture to feed in. Their pastures shall be not only in the vallies but in all high places, which commonly used to be dry and barren. Wherever God brings his people he will take care they shall want nothing that is good for them, *Psal. xxxiv. 10.* And so well shall they be provided for that they shall not hunger nor thirst, for what they need they shall have seasonably, before their need of it comes to any extremity. (2.) They shall be sheltered and protected from every thing that would incommode them; *nor neither shall the heat nor sun smite them, for God causeth his flock to rest at noon, Cant. i. 7.* And no evil thing shall befall those that put themselves under a divine protection; they shall be enabled to bear the burden and heat of the day. (3.) They shall be under God's gracious guidance. He that hath mercy on them in bringing them out of their captivity, shall lead them as he did their fathers in the wilderness, by a pillar of cloud and fire; even by springs of waters, which will be ready to them in their march shall he guide them, *i. e. God will furnish them with suitable and seasonable comforts not like the pools of rain water in the valley of Baca, but like the water out of the rock which followed Israel.*

Those who are under a divine conduct, and follow that close while they do so, may upon good grounds hope for divine comforts and cordials. The world leads its followers by broken cisterns, or brooks that fail in summer; but God leads those that are his by springs of water. And those whom God guides shall find a ready road, and all obstacles removed, *ver. 11. I will make all my mountain a way.* He that in times past made the sea a way, now with as much ease will make the mountains a way, though they seemed impassable. The highway or causey shall be raised to make it both the plainer and the fairer. Note, the ways in which God leads his people, he himself will be the overseer of, and will take care they be well mended and kept in repair, as of old the ways that led to the cities of refuge. The levelling of the roads from Babylon, as it was foretold, *chap. xl. 2, 3.* was applied to gospel-work, and so may this be. Though there be difficulties in the way to heaven which we cannot by our own strength get over,

yet the grace of God shall be sufficient for us to help us over them, and to make even the mountains a way, *chap. xxxv. 8.*

5. He shall bring them all together from all parts, that they may return in a body, that they may encourage one another, and be the more taken notice of. They were dispersed into several parts of the country of Babylon, as their enemies pleased, to prevent any combination among themselves. But when God's time is come to bring them home together, one spirit shall animate them all that lie at the greatest distance from each other; and those also that had taken shelter in other countries shall meet them in the land of Judah, *ver. 12.* Here shall a party come from far, some from the north, some from the west, some from the land of Sinim, which probably is some province of Babylon, not elsewhere named in Scripture. But some make it to be a country belonging to one of the chief cities of Egypt called Sin, of which we read, *Ezek. xxx. 15, 16.* Now this promise was to have a farther accomplishment in the great confluence of converts to the gospel-church, and its full accomplishment when God's chosen shall come from the east and from the west to set down with the patriarchs in the kingdom of God, *Matth. viii. 11.*

13. ¶ Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. 14. But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me. 15. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. 16. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. 17. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.

The scope of these verses is to shew that the return of the people of God out of their captivity, and the eternal redemption to be wrought out by Christ, which that was a type of, would be great occasions of joy to the church, and great proof of the tender care God has of the church.

1. Nothing can furnish us with better matter for songs of praise and thanksgiving, *ver. 13.* Let the whole creation join with us in songs of joy, for it shares with us in the benefits of the redemption, and all they can contribute to this sacred melody, is little enough in return for such ineffable favours, *Psal. xcvi. 11.* Let there be joy in heaven, and let the angels of God celebrate the praises of the great Redeemer; let the earth and the mountains, particularly the great ones of the earth, be joyful, and break forth into singing, for the earnest expectation of the creature that waits for the glorious liberty of the children of God, (*Rom. viii. 19, 21.*) shall now be abundantly answered: God's people are the blessings and ornaments of the world, and therefore let there be an universal joy, for God hath comforted his people that were in sorrow, and he will have mercy upon the afflicted because of his compassion, upon his afflicted because of his covenant.

2. Nothing can furnish us with more convincing arguments to prove the most tender and affectionate concern God hath for his church, and her interests and comforts.

1. The troubles of the church have given some occasion to question God's care and concern for it, *ver. 14.* Zion in distress said, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and doth look after me no more, my Lord hath forgotten me, and will look after me no more.* See how deplorable the case of God's people may be sometimes, such as that they may seem to be forsaken and forgotten of their God; and how violent and prevalent their temptations may be at such a time. Infidels in their presumption say, *God hath forsaken the earth, Ezek. viii. 12.* and hath forgotten their sins, *Psal. x. 11.* Weak believers in their despondency are ready to say, *God hath forsaken his church, and forgotten the sorrows of his people.* But we have no more reason to question his promise and grace, than we have to question his providence and justice. He is as sure a rewarder as he is a revenger. Away therefore with these distrusts and jealousies which are the bane of friendship.

2. The triumphs of the church after her troubles will in due time put the matter out of question. What God will do for Zion, we are told, *ver. 17.* (1.) Her friends that had deserted her shall be gathered to her, and shall contribute their utmost to her assistance and comfort; *thy children shall make haste.* Converts to the faith of Christ are the children of the church, they shall join themselves to her with great readiness and cheerfulness, and flock into the communion of saints, as doves to their windows. *Thy builders shall make haste,* so some read it, that shall build up thy houses, the walls, especially thy temple, that shall do it with expedition; church-work useth to be slow work, but when God's time is come, it shall be done suddenly. (2.) Her enemies that had threatened and assaulted her shall be forced to withdraw from her. *Thy destroyers and they that made thee waste, that had made themselves masters of the country, and ravaged it, shall go forth of thee.* By Christ, the prince of this world, the great destroyer is cast out, is dispossessed, his power broken, and his attempts quite baffled.

Now by this it will appear that Zion's suggestions were altogether groundless; that God hath not forsaken her, or forgotten her, nor ever will, Be assured,

1. That God hath a tender affection for his church and people, *ver. 15.* In answer to Zion's fears God speaks as one concerned for his own glory, he takes himself to be reflected upon, if Zion say, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and he will clear himself.* As one concerned also for his people's comfort, he would not have them droop and be discouraged, and give way to any uneasy thoughts. You think I have forgotten you, *can a woman forget her sucking child?* (1.) It is not likely that she should. A woman, whose honour it is to be the tender sex as well as the fair one, cannot but have compassion for a child, that being both harmless and helpless, is a proper object of compassion. A mother especially cannot but be concerned for her own child, for it is her own, a piece of herself, and very lately one with her. A nursing mother most of all cannot but be tender of her sucking child; her own gorged breasts will soon put her in mind of it, if she should forget it. But (2.) It is possible they may forget. A woman may perhaps be unhappy, as not to be able to remember her sucking child, she may be sick and dying, and going to the land of forgetfulness; or she may be so unnatural as not to have compassion on the son of her womb, as those who to conceal their shame are the death of their children as soon as they have their life, *Lam. iv. 10. Deut. xxviii. 57.* But saith God, *I will not forget thee.* Note, God's compassions to his people infinitely exceed those of the tenderest parents towards their children. What are the affections of nature, to those of the God of nature?

2. That he hath a constant care of his church and people, *ver. 16. I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands:* This doth not allude to the foolish art of palmistry,

palmistry, which imagines every man's fate to be engraved in the palms of his hands, and to be legible in the lines there; but to the custom of those who tie a string upon their hands or fingers, to put them in mind of things that they are afraid they shall forget; or to the wearing of signets or locket-rings in remembrance of some dear friend. His setting them thus as a seal upon his arm, denotes his setting them as a seal upon his heart, and his being ever mindful of them and their interest. *Cant. viii. 6. If we bind God's laws as a sign upon our hand, Deut. vi. 8.—xi. 18. he will engrave our interests as a sign on his hand, and will look upon that and remember the covenant.* He adds, *thy walls shall be continually before me; thy ruined walls, though no pleasing spectacle, shall be in my thoughts of compassion; do Zion's friends favour her dust? Psal. cii. 1-4. so doth her God. Or the plan or model of thy walls that are to be rebuilt is before me, and they shall certainly be built according to it. Or thy walls, i. e. thy safety, it is my continual care; so are the watchmen on thy walls. Some apply this graving of his church on the palms of his hands to the wounds in Christ's hands when he was crucified; he will look on the marks of them, and remember those for whom he suffered and died.*

18. ¶ Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. 19. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. 20. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. 21. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? 22. Thus saith the Lord GOD. Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. 23. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet: and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Two things are here promised, which were to be in part accomplished in the reviving of the Jewish church, after its return out of captivity, but more fully in the planting of the Christian church, by the preaching of the gospel of Christ; and we may take the comfort of these promises.

1. That the church shall be replenished with great numbers added to it. It was promised, *ver. 17. that her children should make haste, that promise is here enlarged upon, and is made very encouraging. It is promised,*

1. That multitudes shall flock to the church from all parts. Look round and see how they gather themselves to thee, *ver. 18. by a local accession to the Jewish church; they come to Jerusalem from all the adjacent countries, for that was then the center of their unity; but under the gospel it is by a spiritual accession to the mystical body of Christ in faith and love; those that are come to Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant, thereby come to the mount Zion, the church of the first-born, Heb. xii. 22, 23. Lift up thine eyes and behold how the fields are white unto the harvest, John iv. 35. Note, It is matter of joy to the church to see a multitude of converts to Christ.*

2. That such as are added to the church shall not be a burden and blemish to her, but her strength and ornament. This part of the promise is confirmed with an oath, *As I live saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all;* the addition of such numbers to the church shall complete her clothing, and when all that were chosen are effectually called, then the bride, the lamb's wife, shall have made herself ready, shall be quite dressed, *Rev. xix. 7. They shall make her to appear comely and considerable; and she shall therefore bind them on with as much care and complacency as a bride doth her ornaments. When those that are added to the church are serious and holy, and exemplary in their conversation, they are an ornament to it.*

3. That thus the country that was waste and desolate, and without inhabitant, *Isa. v. 9.—vi. 11. shall be again peopled, nay, it shall be over-peopled, ver. 19. Thy waste and thy desolate places, they have long lain so, and the land of thy destruction, that land of thine which was destroyed with thee, and which nobody cared for dwelling in, shall now be so full of people that there shall be no room for the inhabitants. Here is a blessing poured out till there be not room enough to receive it, Mal. iii. 10. Not that they shall be crowded by their enemies, or straitened for room, as Abraham and Lot were, because of the Canaanite in the land; no, they that swallowed thee up, and took possession of thy land when thy possession of it was discontinued, shall be far away. Thy people shall be numerous, and there shall be no stranger, no enemy among them. Thus the kingdom of God among men, that had been impoverished and almost depopulated, partly by the corruptions of the Jewish church, and partly by the abominations of the Gentile world, was again peopled and enriched by the setting up of the Christian church, and the graces and glories of that.*

4. That the new converts shall strangely increase and multiply! Jerusalem after she has lost abundance of her children by the sword, famine, and captivity, shall have a new brood growing up instead of them; children which she shall have after she has lost the other, *ver. 20. as Seth that was appointed another seed instead of Abel; and Job's children which God blessed him with instead of those that were killed in the ruins of the house. God will repair his church's losses, and secure to himself a seed to serve him in it. It is promised to the Jews after their return, that Jerusalem shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets, Zech. viii. 5. The church after it has lost the Jews, who will be cut off by their own infidelity, yet shall have abundance of children still, more than she had when the Jews belonged to her. See Gal. iv. 27. They shall be so numerous that, (1.) The children shall complain for want of room; they shall say (and it is a good hearing) that their numbers increase so fast that the place is too strait for them, as the sons of the prophets complained, 2 Kings vi. 1. But as strait as the place is, still more shall desire to be admitted, and the church shall gladly admit them, and the inconvenient straits of the place shall be no hindrance to either,*

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for it will be found, whatever we think, that even when the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, are brought in, yet still there is room, room enough for those that are in, and room for more, *Luke xiv. 21, 22. (2.) The mother shall stand amazed at the increase of her family, ver. 21. She shall say, who hath begotten me these? and who has brought up these? They come to her with all the duty, affection, and submission of children, and yet she never bore any pain for them, nor took any pains with them, but had them ready reared to her hand. This gives her a pleasing surprise, and she cannot but be astonished at it, considering what her condition had been very lately, and very long. The Jewish nation had left her children, they were cut off, she had been desolate, without ark, and altar, and temple-service, those tokens of God's espousals to them; nay, she had been a captive, and continually removing to and fro, in an unsettled condition, and not likely to bring up children either for God or herself. She was left alone in obscurity, *This is Zion whom no man seeketh after;* left in all the solitude and sorrow of a widowed state. How then came she to be thus replenished? See here, (1.) That the church is not perpetually visible, but there are times when it is desolate and left alone, and made few in number. (2.) That yet on the other hand its desolation shall not be perpetual, nor will it be found too hard for God to repair them, and out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham. (3.) That sometimes this is done in a very surprising way, as when a nation is born at once, *chap. lvi. 8.**

5. That this shall be done with the help of the Gentiles, *ver. 22. The Jews were cast off, among whom it was expected that the church should be built up, but God will sow it to himself in the earth, and from thence will reap a plentiful crop, Hos. ii. 23. Observe, (1.) How the Gentiles shall be called in, God will lift up his hand to them, to invite or beckon them, having all the day stretched it out in vain to the Jews, chap. lvi. 2. Or it notes the exerting of an almighty power, that of his Spirit and grace, to compel them to come in, i. e. to make them willing. And he will set up his standard to them, i. e. the preaching of the everlasting gospel, to which they shall gather, and under which they shall lift themselves. (2.) How they shall come; they shall bring thy sons in their arms, i. e. either they shall assist the sons of Zion which are found among them, in their return to their own country, and shall forward them with as much tenderness as ever any parent carried a child that was weak and helpless. God can raise up friends for returning Israelites, even among Gentiles. *The earth helped the woman, Rev. xii. 16. Or when they come themselves they shall bring their children, and make them thy children; compare chap. lx. 40. Dost thou ask who has begotten and brought up these? Know, that they were begotten and brought up among the Gentiles, but they are now brought into thy family. Let all that are concerned about young converts and young beginners in religion, learn hence to deal very tenderly and carefully with them, as Christ doth with the lambs whom he gathers with his arms, and carries in his bosom.**

That the church shall have a great and prevailing interest in the nations, *ver. 23. (1.) Some of the princes of the nations shall become patrons and protectors to the church: kings shall be thy nursing fathers, to carry thy sons in their arms, ver. 21. As Moses, Numb. xi. 14. And because women are the most proper nurses, their queens shall be thy nursing mothers. This promise was in part fulfilled to the Jews, after their return out of captivity; divers of the kings of Persia were very tender of their interests, countenanced and encouraged them, as Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes; Esther the queen was a nursing mother to the Jews that remained in their captivity, putting her life in her hand to snatch the child out of the flames. The Christian church after a long captivity was happy in some such kings and queens as Constantine, and his mother Helena, and afterwards Theodosius, and others, that nursed the church with all possible care and tenderness. Whenever the sceptre of government is put into the hands of religious princes, then this promise is fulfilled. The church in this world is in an infant state, and it is in the power of princes and magistrates to do it a great deal of service; it is happy when they do so, when their power is a praise to them that do well. (2.) Others of them that stand it out against the church's interest will be forced to yield, and repent of their opposition; they shall bow down to thee and lick the dust. The promise to the church of Philadelphia seems to be borrowed from this, *Rev. iii. 9. I will make them of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before thy feet.* Or it may be meant of the willing subjection which kings and kingdoms shall pay to Christ the church's King, as he manifests himself in the church, *Psalm. lxxii. 11. All kings shall fall down before him.* And by all this it shall be made to appear, (1.) That God is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, against whom there is no standing out, or rising up. (2.) That those that wait for him in a dependence upon his promise, and a resignation to his will, shall not be made ashamed of their hope; for the vision of peace is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and shall not lie.*

24. ¶ Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? 25. But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. 26. And I will feed them that oppress thee, with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour, and thy redeemer the mighty one of Jacob.

Here is, 1. An objection started against the promise of the Jews' release out of their captivity in Babylon, suggesting that it was a thing not to be expected; for, *ver. 24. they were a prey in the hand of the mighty, of such as were then the greatest potentates on earth, and therefore it was not likely they should be rescued by force; yet that was not all, they were lawful captives, by the law of God having offended they were justly delivered into captivity. And by the law of nations being taken in war, they were justly detained in captivity till they should be ransomed or exchanged. Now this is spoken either, (1.) By the enemies as justifying themselves in their refusal to let them go; they plead both might and right; proud men think all their own they can lay their hands on, and their title good if they have but the longest sword. (2.) Or by their friends; either in a way of distrust, despairing of the deliverance, for who is able to deal with those that detain us, either by force of arms, or a treaty of peace? Or in a way of thankfulness, admiring the deliverance, who would have thought that ever the prey should be taken from the mighty? Yet it is done. This is applicable to our redemption by Christ; as to Satan we were a prey in the hand of the mighty, and yet delivered even from him that had the power of death, by him that had the power of life. As to the justice of God, we were lawful captives, and yet delivered by a price of inestimable value.*

2. This objection answered by an express promise, and a farther promise; for

for God's promises being all yea, and amen, they may well serve to corroborate one another.

1. Here is an express promise with a non obstante to the strength of the enemy, ver. 25. *Even the captives of the mighty*, though they are mighty, shall be taken away, and it is to no purpose for them to oppose it; *and the prey of the terrible*, though they are terrible, shall be delivered; and as they cannot with all their strength out-force, so they cannot with all their impudence out-face the deliverance, and the counsels of God concerning it. *The Lord saith thus*, who having all power in his hands, and all hearts, is able to make his words good.

2. Here is a farther promise, shewing how, and in what way, God will bring about the deliverance. He will bring judgments upon the oppressors, and so will work salvation for the oppressed. *I will contend with him that contendeth with thee*, will plead thy cause against those that justify themselves in oppressing thee; whoever it be, though but a single person that contendeth with thee, he shall know that it is at his peril, and thus *I will save thy children*; the captives shall be delivered by leading *captivity captive*, i. e. sending those into captivity that had held God's people captive, Rev. xiii. 10. Nay, they shall have blood for blood, ver. 26. *I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh*, and they shall be drunken with their own blood, i. e. The proud Babylonians shall become not only an easy, but an acceptable prey to one another; God will send a dividing Spirit among them, and their ruin, which was begun by a foreign invasion, shall be completed by their intestine divisions. They shall bite and devour one another, till they are consumed one of another. They shall greedily and with delight prey upon those that are their own flesh and blood; God can make the oppressors of his church to be their own tormentors, and their own destroyers. The New Testament Babylon having made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, shall have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy. See how cruel men sometimes are to themselves, to one another, and those that are so to others are so to themselves; for God's justice and men's revenge will mete to them what they have measured to others; they not only thirst after blood, but drink it so greedily that they are drunken with it, and with as much pleasure as if it were sweet wine. If God had not more mercy on sinners than they would have upon one another, were their passions let loose, the world would be soon as Aceldama, nay, a desolation.

And (lastly) see what will be the effect of Babylon's ruin, *all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour*; God will make it to appear to the conviction of all the world, that though Israel seem lost and cast off, they have a redeemer, and though they are made a prey to the mighty, Jacob hath a Mighty One, that is able to deal with all his enemies. God intends by the deliverances of his church both to notify and to magnify his own name.

C H A P. L.

In this chapter, (1.) Those to whom God sends are justly charged with bringing all the troubles they were in upon themselves, by their own wilfulness and obduracy; it being made to appear that God was able and ready to help them, if they had been fit for deliverance, ver. 1—3. (2.) He by whom God sends produceth his commission, ver. 4. Alledgeth his own readiness to submit to all the services and sufferings he was called to in the execution of it, ver. 5, 6. and assures himself that God, who sent him, would stand by him, and bear him out against all opposition, ver. 7, 8, 9. (3.) The message that is sent is life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse; comfort to desponding saints, and terror to presuming sinners, ver. 10, 11. Now all this seems to have a double reference, (1.) To the unbelieving Jews in Babylon, who quarrelled with God for his dealings with them; and to the prophet Isaiah, who though dead long before the captivity, yet prophesying so plainly and fully of it, saw fit to produce his credentials, to justify what he had said. (2.) To the unbelieving Jews in our Saviour's time whose own fault it was that they were rejected; Christ having preached much to them, and suffered much from them, and being herein borne up by a divine power. The contents of this chapter in our Bible gives this sense of it very concisely, thus; Christ shews that the dereliction of the Jews is not to be imputed to him; by his ability to save, by his obedience in that work, and by his confidence in divine assistance. And concludes with an exhortation to trust in God, and not in ourselves.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. 2. Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. 3. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

Those who have professed to be the people of God, and yet seem to be dealt severely with, are apt to complain of God, and to lay the fault upon him, as if he had been hard with them. But in answer to their murmuring we have here,

1. A challenge given them to prove, or produce any evidence that the quarrel began on God's side, ver. 1. — They could not say that he had done them any wrong, or had acted arbitrarily. (1.) He had been a husband to them, and husbands were then allowed a power to put away their wives upon any little disgust; if they found not favour in their eyes, they made nothing of giving them a bill of divorce, Deut. xxiv. 1. Matt. xix. 7. But they could not say that God had dealt so with them; it is true they were now separated from him, and had abode many days without ephod, altar, or sacrifice, but whose fault was that? They could not say that God had given their mother a bill of divorce; let them produce it if they can, for a bill of divorce was given into the hand of her that was divorced. (2.) He had been a father to them, and fathers had then a power to sell their children for slaves to their creditors, in satisfaction for the debts they were not otherwise able to pay: now it was true that the Jews were sold to the Babylonians then, and afterwards to the Romans, but did God sell them for payment of their debts? No, he was not indebted to any of those to whom they were sold, or if he had, he did not increase his wealth by their price, Psal. xlv. 12. When God chastens his children it is neither for his pleasure, Heb. xii. 10, not for his profit; all that are saved, are saved by a pre-

rogative of grace, but those that perish are cut off by an act of divine holiness and justice, not of absolute sovereignty.

2. A charge exhibited against them, shewing them that they were themselves the authors of their own ruin. *Behold, for your iniquities*, for the pleasure of them, and the gratification of your own base lusts, *you have sold yourselves*, for your iniquities you are sold; not as children are sold by their parents to pay their debts, but as malefactors are sold by the judges, to punish them for their crimes. You sold yourselves to work wickedness, and therefore God justly sold you into the hands of your enemies, 2 Chron. xii. 5—8. It is for your transgressions that your mother is put away, for her whoredoms and adulteries, which were always allowed to be a just cause of divorce. The Jews were sent into Babylon for their idolatry, a sin which broke the marriage covenant, and were at last rejected for crucifying the Lord of glory, these were the iniquities for which they were sold and put away.

3. The confirmation of this challenge and this charge:

1. It is plain it was along of themselves that they were cast off, for God came and offered them his favour, offered them his helping hand, either to prevent their trouble, or to deliver them out of it, but they slighted him and all the tenders of his grace. Do you lay it upon me? saith God, tell me then, wherefore when I came there was no man to meet me? when I called, there was none to answer me? ver. 2. God came to them by his servants the prophets, demanding the fruits of his vineyard, Matt. xxi. 34. Sent them his messengers, rising up betimes and sending them, Jer. xxxv. 15. Called to them to leave their sins, and so prevent their own ruin; but there was no man, or next to none, that had any regard to the warnings which the prophets gave them, none that answered the calls of God, or complied with the messages he sent them; and this was it for which they were sold and put away; because they mocked the messengers of the Lord, therefore God brought upon them the kings of the Chaldees, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16, 17. Last of all he sent unto them his Son, he came to his own, but his own received him not, he called them to himself, but there were none that answered, he would have gathered Jerusalem's children together, but they would not; they knew not because they would not know the things that belonged to their peace, nor the day of their visitation, and for that transgression it was that they were put away, and their house left desolate, Matt. xxi. 41—xxiii. 27, 38. Luke xix. 41, 42. When God calls men to happiness, and they will not answer, they are justly left to be miserable.

2. It is plain it was not along of God, for he is almighty, and could have recovered them from so great a death; not along of Christ, for he is able to save to the uttermost. The unbelieving Jews in Babylon thought they were not delivered because their God was not able to do it; and those in Christ's time were ready to ask in scorn, can this man save us? for himself he cannot save. But (saith God) *Is my hand shortened at all?* or is it weakened? Can any limits be set to omnipotence? Cannot he redeem who is the great Redeemer? Or, hath he no power to deliver whose all power is? To put to silence, and for ever to put to shame their doubts concerning his power, he here gives unquestionable proofs of it. (1.) He can when he pleaseth dry up the seas, and make the rivers a wilderness, he did so for Israel when he redeemed them out of Egypt, he can do so again for their redemption out of Babylon. It is done at his rebuke, as easily as with a word speaking; he can so dry up the rivers, as to leave the fish to die for want of water, and to putrify. When God turned the waters of Egypt into blood, he slew the fish, Psal. cv. 24. The expression our Saviour sometimes used concerning the power of faith, that it will remove mountains, and plant sycamores in the sea, is not unlike this; if their faith could do that, no doubt, their faith would save them, and therefore they were inexcusable if they perished in their unbelief. (2.) He can when he pleaseth eclipse the lights of heaven, clothe them with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering, by thick and dark clouds interposing, which he balanceth, Job xxxvi. 32, —xxxvii. 16.

4. The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned, 5. The LORD God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. 6. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. 7. ¶ For the Lord God will help me: therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face as a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. 8. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. 9. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

Our Lord Jesus having proved himself able to save, here shews himself as willing as he is able. — We suppose the prophet Isaiah to say something of himself in these verses, engaging and encouraging himself to go on in his work, as a prophet, notwithstanding the many hardships he met with, not doubting but that God would stand by him and strengthen him. But, like David, often he speaks of himself as a type of Christ, who is here prophesied of, and promised to be the Saviour.

1. As an acceptable preacher, ver. 4. Isaiah, as a prophet, was qualified for the work to which he was called, so were the rest of God's prophets, and others whom he employed as his messengers, but Christ was anointed with the Spirit above his fellows. To make the man of God perfect he hath. (1.) The tongue of the learned, to know how to give instruction, how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. God, who made man's mouth, gave Moses the tongue of the learned to speak for the terror and conviction of Pharaoh, Exod. iv. 11, 12. He gave to Christ the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season for the comfort of those that are weary and heavy laden under the burden of sin, Matt. xi. 28. Grace was poured into his lips, and they are said to drop sweet smelling myrrh. See what is the best learning of a minister, to know how to comfort troubled consciences, and to speak pertinently, and properly, and plainly to the various cases of poor souls. An ability to do this is God's gift, and it is one of the best gifts, which we should covet earnestly. And let us repose ourselves in the many comfortable words which Christ hath spoken to the weary. (2.) The ear of the learned to receive instruction. And this prophets have as much need of, as of the tongue of the learned; for they must deliver what they are taught, and no other; must hear the word from God's mouth diligently and attentively, that they may speak it exactly, Ezek. iii. 17. Christ

Christ himself received that he might give. None must undertake to be teachers that have not first been learners; Christ's apostles were first disciples, *scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xiii. 42. Nor is it enough to hear, but we must hear as the learned, hear and understand; hear and remember; hear as those that would learn by what we hear. Those that would hear as the learned must be awake, and wakeful, for we are naturally drowsy and sleepy, and unapt to hear at all; or hear by the halves; hear and do not heed. Our ears need to be awakened, we need to have something said to rouse us, to waken us out of our spiritual slumbers, that we may hear as for our lives. We need to be wakened morning by morning, as duly as the day returns, to be awakened to do the work of the day in its day. Our case calls for continual fresh supplies of divine grace, to free us from the dulness we contract daily. The morning, when our spirits are most lively, is a proper time for communion with God; then we are in the best frame both to speak to him, *my voice shalt thou hear in the morning*, and to hear from him, the people came early in the morning to hear Christ in the temple, *Luke xxi. 38*. For, it seems, his were morning lectures, and it is God that wakens us morning by morning; those that do any thing to purpose in his service, it is he that as their master calls them up, and we should doze perpetually, if he did not waken us morning by morning.

2. As a patient sufferer, *ver. 5, 6*. One would think he that was commissioned and qualified to speak comfort to the weary, should meet with no difficulty in his work, but an universal acceptance; but it is quite otherwise, he hath both hard work to do, and hard usage to undergo; and here he tells us with what an undaunted constancy he went through with it; we have no reason to question but that the prophet Isaiah went on resolutely in the work to which God had called, though we read not of his undergoing any such hardships as are here supposed; but we are sure it was abundantly verified in Jesus Christ; and here we have,

(1.) His patient obedience in his doing-work. The Lord God hath not only wakened my ear to hear what he saith, but hath opened my ear to receive it, and comply with it, *Psal. xl. 6, 7*. *My ear hath thou opened, then said I, Lo I come*; for when he adds, *I was not rebellious, neither turned away back*, more is implied than expressed, that he was willing, that though he foresaw a great deal of difficulty and discouragement, though he was to take pains, and give constant attendance as a servant, though he was to empty himself of that which was very great, and humble himself to that which was very mean, yet he did not fly off, did not fail, nor was discouraged. He continued very free, and very forward to his work, even when he came to the hardest part of it. Note, As a good understanding in the truths of God, so a good-will and affection to the work and service of God, is from the grace of God.

(2.) His obedient patience in his suffering-work. I call it obedient patience, because he was patient with an eye to his Father's will; thus pleading with himself, *This commandment have I received of my Father*; and thus submitting to God, *not as I will, but as thou wilt*. In this submission he resigned himself, (1.) To be scourged, *I gave my back to the smiters*; and that not only by submitting to it when he was smitten, but by permitting it, or admitting it rather, among other the instances of pain and shame he would voluntarily undergo for us. (2.) To be buffeted; *I gave my cheeks to them*, that not only smote them, but plucked off the hair of the beard, which was a greater degree both of pain and ignominy. (3.) To be spit upon, *I hid not my face from shame and spitting*. He could have hid his face from it, could have avoided it, but he would not; because he was made a reproach of men, and thus he would answer the type of Job, that man of sorrows, of whom it is said, that they smote him on the cheek reproachfully, *Job xvi. 10*, and spared not to spit in his face, *Job xxx. 10*, which is an expression not only of contempt, but of abhorrence and indignation. All this Christ underwent for us and voluntarily, to convince us of his willingness to save us.

3. As a courageous champion, *ver. 7, 8, 9*. The Redeemer is as famous for his boldness as for his humility and patience, and though he yields, yet he is more than a conqueror.

Observe, 1. The dependance he hath upon God. What was the prophet Isaiah's support, was the support of Christ himself, *ver. 7*. *The Lord God will help me*, and again, *ver. 9*. whom God employs he will assist, and will take care they want not any help that they or their work call for. God having laid help upon his son for us, gave help to him, and his hand was all along with the man of his right hand. Nor will he only assist him in his work, but accept of him, *ver. 1*. *He is near that justifieth me*. Isaiah, no doubt, was falsely accused, and loaded with reproach and calumny, as other prophets were, but he despised it, knowing that God would roll away the reproach, and bring forth his righteousness as the light; perhaps in this world, *Psal. xxxvii. 6*, however in the great day, when there will be a resurrection of names as well as bodies, and the righteous shall shine forth as the morning sun. And so it was verified in Christ; by his resurrection he was proved to be not the man that he was represented, not a blasphemer, not a deceiver, not an enemy to Cæsar; the judge that condemned him, owned he found no fault in him; the centurion, or sheriff, that had charge of his execution, declared him a righteous man: so near was he that justified him. But it was true of him in a farther and more peculiar sense; the Father justified him, when he accepted the satisfaction he made for the sin of man, and constituted him the Lord our righteousness, who was made sin for us: he was justified in the Spirit, *1 Tim. iii. 16*. He was near that did it; for his resurrection, by which he was justified, came presently after he was condemned and crucified: he was straightway glorified, *John xiii. 32*.

2. The confidence he thereupon hath of success in his undertaking: if God will help me, if he will justify me, will stand by me, and bear me out, *I shall not be confounded*, as those are that come short of the end they aimed at, and the satisfaction they promised themselves; *I know that I shall not be ashamed*: though his enemies did all they could to put him to shame, yet he kept his ground, he kept his countenance, and was not ashamed of the work he had undertaken. Note, Work for God is work that we should not be ashamed of; and hope in God is hope that we shall not be ashamed of. Those that trust in God for help shall not be disappointed; they know whom they have trusted, and therefore know they shall not be ashamed.

3. The defiance which in this confidence he bids to all opposers and opposition; *God will help me, and therefore have I set my face like a flint*. The prophet did so; he was bold in reproving sin, and warning sinners, *Ezek. iii. 8, 9*, and in asserting the truth of his predictions. Christ did so; he went on in his work, as Mediator, with an unshaken constancy, and undaunted resolution; he did not fail, nor was discouraged; and here he challengeth all his opposers, (1.) To enter the lists with him; *who will contend with me?* either in law, or by the sword? *Let us stand together as combatants*, or as the plaintiff and defendant, *Who is mine adversary?* who is the master of my cause? so the word is; who will pretend to enter an action against me? Let him appear, and come near to me, for I will not abscond. Many offered to dispute with Christ, but he put them to silence. The prophet speaks this in the name of all faithful ministers: those who keep close to the pure word of God in delivering their message need not fear the contradiction that may be given them, the scriptures will bear them out, who ever contends with them: *Great is the truth, and will prevail*. Christ speaks

this in the name of all believers, speaks it as their champion; who dares be an enemy to those whom he is a friend to, or contend with those for whom he is an advocate? Thus St. Paul applies it, *Rom. viii. 38*. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* (2.) He challengeth them to prove any crime upon him, *ver. 9*. *Who is he that shall condemn me?* The prophet, perhaps, was condemned to die; Christ we are sure was, and yet both could say, *Who is he that shall condemn?* for there is no condemnation to them whom God justifies. There were those that did condemn them, but what came of them; *They all shall wax old as a garment*: The righteous cause of Christ and his prophets shall out-live all opposition. The moth shall eat them up silently and insensibly, a little thing will serve to do their business; but the roaring lion himself shall not prevail against God's witnesses. All believers are enabled to make this challenge, *Who is he that shall condemn? Is it Christ that died*.

10. ¶ *Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and slay upon his God*. 11. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

The prophet having the tongue of the learned given him, that he might give to every one their portion, here makes use of it, rightly dividing the word of truth: it is the summary of the gospel, *he that believeth shall be saved*, that trust in the name of the Lord shall be comforted, though for a while he walk in darkness and have no light: but he that believeth not shall be damned, though for a while he walk in the light of his own fire, yet he shall lie down in sorrow.

1. Comfort is here spoken to disconsolate saints, and they are encouraged to trust in God's grace, *ver. 10*. Where observe,

(1.) What is always the character of a child of God; he is one that fears the Lord with a filial fear, that stands in awe of his majesty, and is afraid of incurring his displeasure. This is a grace that usually appears most in good people, then when they walk in darkness; when other graces appear not: they then tremble at his word, *Isa. lxvi. 2*, and are afraid of his judgments, *Psal. cxix. 120*. He is one that obeys the voice of his servant; i. e. is willing to be ruled by the Lord Jesus, as God's servant, in the great work of man's redemption; one that yields a sincere obedience to the law of Christ, and cheerfully comes up to the terms of his covenant. Those that truly see God, will obey the voice of Christ.

(2.) What is sometimes the case of a child of God; it is supposed, that though he has in his heart the fear of God, and faith in Christ, yet for a time he walks in darkness and hath no light, is disquieted, and hath little or no comfort: Who is there that doth so? which intimates that it is a case that sometimes happens among the professors of religion, yet not very often; but whenever it happens, God takes notice of it. It is no new thing for the children and heirs of light sometimes to walk in darkness, and for a time not to have any glimpse or gleam of light; it is not meant so much of the comforts of this life; those that fear God, when they have never so great an abundance of them, do not walk in them as their light; as of their spiritual comforts, which relate to their souls: they walk in darkness when their evidences for heaven are clouded, their joy in God is interrupted, the testimony of the Spirit is suspended, and the light of God's countenance eclipsed. Serious Christians are apt to be melancholy ones, and those who fear always do fear too much.

(3.) What is likely to be an effectual cure in this sad case: he that is thus in the dark, (1.) Let him trust in the name of the Lord, in the goodness of his nature, and that which he has made known of himself, and his own wisdom, power, and goodness. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, let him run into that: let him depend upon it, that if he walk before God, which a man may do though he walk in the dark, he shall find God all-sufficient to him. (2.) Let him stay himself upon his God, his in covenant; let him keep hold of his covenant-relation to God, and call God his God for all this; as Christ on the cross, *My God, my God*: Let him stay himself upon the promises of the covenant, and build his hopes on them. When a child of God is ready to sink, he will find enough in God to stay himself upon; let him trust in Christ, for God's name is in him, *Exod. xxiii. 11*. trust in that name of his, *The Lord our righteousness*, and stay himself upon God as his God, in and through a mediator.

2. Conviction is here spoken to presuming sinners, and they are warned not to trust in themselves, *ver. 11*. Observe, (1.) The description given of them: They kindle a fire, and walk in the light of that fire; they depend upon their own righteousness, offer all their sacrifices, and burn all their in-cense with that fire, as Nadab and Abihu, and not with the fire from heaven; in their hope of acceptance with God, they have no regard to the righteousness of Christ: they refresh and please themselves with a conceit of their own merit and sufficiency, and warm themselves with that; it is both light and heat to them: they compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling. As they trust in their own righteousness, and not in the righteousness of Christ, so they place their happiness in their worldly possessions and enjoyments, and not in the favour of God. Creature comforts are as sparks, short-lived, and soon gone; yet the children of this world, while they last, warm themselves by them, and walk with pride and pleasure in the light of them. (2.) The doom passed upon them: they are ironically bid to walk in the light of their own fire; make your best of it, while it lasts. This shall ye have of mine hand (saith Christ, for to him the judgment is committed) ye shall lie down in sorrow, shall go to to bed in the dark; see *Job xviii. 5, 6*. *His candle shall be put out with him*. Those that make the world their comfort, and their own righteousness their confidence, will certainly meet with a fatal disappointment, which will be bitterness in the end. A godly man's way may be melancholy, but his end shall be peace and everlasting light: A wicked man's ways may be pleasant, but his end and endless abode will be utter darkness.

C H A P. LI.

This chapter is designed for the comfort and encouragement of those that fear God and keep his commandments, even then when they walk in darkness, and have no light: whether it was intended primarily for the support of the captives in Babylon is not certain, probably it was, but comforts thus generally expressed ought not to be so confined. Whenever the church of God is in distress, her friends and well-wishers, may comfort themselves and one another with these words here; (1.) That God who raised his church at first out of nothing, will take care it shall not perish, *ver. 1-3*. (2.) That the righteousness and salvation

he designs for his church are sure and near, very near and very sure, ver. 4—6. (2.) That the persecutors of the church are weak and dying creatures, ver. 7, 8. (4.) That the same power which did wonders for the church formerly is now engaged and employed for her protection and deliverance, ver. 2—11. (5.) That God himself the maker of the world had undertaken both to deliver his people out of their distress, and to comfort them under it, and sent his prophet to assure them of it, ver. 12—16. (6.) That as deplorable as the condition of the church now was, ver. 17—20. to the same woeful circumstances her persecutors and oppressors should shortly be reduced, and worse, ver. 20—23. The three first paragraphs of this chapter begin with, *harken unto me*, and they are God's people that are all along called to *harken*; for even when comforts are spoken to them, sometimes they *harken* not through anguish of spirit, *Exod. vi. 9.* therefore they are again and again called to *harken*, ver. 1—4—7. The two other paragraphs of this chapter begin with *awake, awake*; in the former, ver. 9. God's people call upon him to awake and help them; in the latter, ver. 17. God calls upon them to awake and help themselves.

1. HEARKEN to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD; look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. **2.** Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. **3.** For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

Observe, (1.) How the people of God are here described, to whom the word of this consolation is sent, and who are called upon to *harken* to it, ver. 1. They are such as follow after righteousness, that are very solicitous and very desirous both to be justified, and to be sanctified, are pressing hard after this, to have the favour of God restored to them, and the image of God renewed on them. These are they that seek the Lord, for it is only in the way of righteousness that we can seek him with any hopes of finding him.

2. How they are here directed to look back to their original, and the smallness of their beginning: *look unto the rock whence ye are hewn*, the idolatrous family in Ur of the Chaldees, out of which Abraham was taken, the generation of slaves which the heads and fathers of their tribes were in Egypt; *look unto the hole of the pit out of which ye are digged*, as clay, when God formed you into a people. Note, It is good for those that are privileged by a new birth, to consider what they were by their first birth; how they were conceived in iniquity and shapen in sin: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; how hard was that rock out of which we were hewn, unapt to receive impressions; and how dirty the hole of the pit out of which we were digged! The consideration hereof should fill us with low thoughts of ourselves, and high thoughts of divine grace. Those that are now advanced would do well to remember how low they began, ver. 2. *Look unto Abraham your father*, the father of all the faithful, of all that follow after the righteousness of faith as he did, *Rom. iv. 11.* And unto Sarah that bare you, and whose daughters you all are as long as you do well; think how Abraham was called alone, and yet was blessed and multiplied; and let that encourage all believers to depend upon the promise of God, even when a sentence of death seems to be upon all the means that leads to the performance of it. Particularly let it encourage the captives in Babylon, though they are reduced to a small number and few of them left, to hope that yet they should increase so as to replenish their own land again. When Jacob is very small, yet he is not so small as Abraham was, who yet became father of many nations. Look unto Abraham, and see what ye got by trusting in the promise of God, and take example by him to follow God with an implicit faith.

3. How they are assured that their present seediness of tears should end in a harvest of joys at length, ver. 3. The church of God on earth, even the gospel of Zion, hath sometimes had her deserts and waste places; many parts of the church, either through corruption or persecution, made like a wilderness, unfruitful to God, or uncomfortable to the inhabitants; but God will find out a true and way to comfort Zion, not only by speaking comfortably to her, but by acting graciously for her. God has comforts in store even for the waste places of his church, for those parts of it that seem nor regarded or valued. (1.) He will make them fruitful, and so give them cause to rejoice; her wilderness shall put on a new face, and look pleasant as Eden, and abound in all good fruits as the garden of the Lord. Note, It is the greatest comfort of the church to be made serviceable to the glory of God, and to be as his garden in which he delights. (2.) He will make them cheerful, and so give them hearts to rejoice: with the fruits of righteousness, joy and gladness shall be found therein; for the more holiness men have, and the more good they do, the more gladness they have. And where there is joy and gladness to their satisfaction, it is fit there should be thanksgiving to God's honour; for whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and the returns of God's favour ought to be celebrated with the voice of melody; which will be the more melodious, when God gives songs in the night, songs in the desert.

4. ¶ Harken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. **5.** My righteousness is near: my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arms shall they trust. **6.** Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. **7. ¶** Harken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men; neither be ye afraid of their revilings. **8.** For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteous-

ness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Both these proclamations, as I may call them, end alike with an assurance of the perpetuity of God's righteousness, and his salvation, and therefore we put them together, both being designed for the comfort of God's people; Observe,

1. Who are they to whom this comfort belongs: my people and my nation, that I have set apart for myself, that own me, and are owned by me. Those are God's people and his nation, who are subject to him as their King and their God, pay allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection accordingly. They are a people that know righteousness not only have the means of knowledge, and to whom righteousness is made known, but improve those means, and are able to form a right judgment of truth and falsehood, good and evil. And as they have good heads, so they have good hearts, for they have the law of God in them, written and ruling there. Those God owns for his people, in whose heart his law is. Even those that know righteousness, and have the law of God in their heart, may yet be in great distress and sorrow, and loaded with reproach and contempt; but their God will comfort them with the righteousness they know, and the law they have in their hearts.

2. What the comfort is, that belong to God's people:

(1.) That the gospel of Christ shall be preached and published to the world; a law shall proceed from me, an evangelical law, the law of Christ, the law of faith, *Iju. ii. 3.* This law is his judgment, for it is that law of liberty by which the world shall be governed and judged; this shall not only go forth, but shall continue and rest, it shall take firm footing and deep root in the world; it shall rest not only for the benefit of the Jews, that had the first notice of it, but for a light to the people of other nations. It is this law, this judgment, that we are required to *harken* and give ear to at our peril; for how shall we escape if we neglect it, and turn a deaf ear to it? when a law proceeds from God, *He that has ears to hear let him hear.*

(2.) That this law and judgment shall bring with it righteousness and salvation shall open a ready way to the children of men how they may be justified and saved, ver. 5. It is called God's righteousness and his salvation, because of his contriving and bringing it about: it is a righteousness that he will accept for us and accept us for; and a righteousness which he will work in us and graciously accept of; it is the salvation of the Lord, for it ariseth from him and terminates in him. Observe, There is no salvation without righteousness; and wherever there is the righteousness of God there shall be his salvation. All those, and those only, that are justified and sanctified shall be glorified.

(3.) That this righteousness and salvation shall very shortly appear: it is near, it is gone forth; the decree is gone forth concerning it, it shall as certainly be introduced as if it were gone forth already, and the time for it is at hand. It is near in time; behold all things are now ready; it is near in place, not far to seek, but the word is nigh us, and Christ in the word, righteousness in the word, *Rom. x. 8.*

(4.) That this evangelical righteousness and salvation shall not be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall be extended to the Gentiles; *mine arms shall judge the people.* Those that will not yield to the judgments of God's mouth, shall be crushed by the judgments of his hand. Some shall thus be judged by the gospel, for judgment Christ came into this world; but others and those of the isles shall wait upon him, and bid his gospel, and the commands, as well as the comforts of it, welcome. It was a comfort to God's people, to his nations, that multitudes should be added to them, and the increase of their number should be the increase of their strength and beauty. It is added, and on mine arms shall they trust, that arm of the Lord, which is revealed in Christ, *Iju. liii. 1.* Observe, God's arm shall judge the people that are impenitent, and yet on his arm shall others trust, and be saved by it; for it is to us as we make it a favour of life or death.

(5.) That this righteousness and salvation shall be for ever, and shall never be abolished, ver. 8. It is an everlasting righteousness that the Messiah brings in, *Dan. ix. 24.* an eternal redemption that he is the author of, *Heb. v. 9.* As it shall spread through all the nations of the earth, so it shall last through all the ages of the world. We must never expect any other way of salvation, any other covenant of peace, or rule of righteousness, but what we have in the gospel, and what we have there shall continue to the end, *Matt. xxviii. 20.* It is for ever, for the consequence of it shall be to eternity; and by this law of liberty men's everlasting state will be determined. This perpetuity of the gospel, and the blessed things it brings in, is illustrated by the fading and perishing of this world, and all things in it. Look up to the visible heavens above, which have continued hitherto, and seem likely to continue, but they shall vanish like smoke that soon spends itself and disappears; they shall be rolled like a scroll, and their lights shall fall like leaves in autumn: look down to the earth beneath, that abideth too short for ever, *Eccles. i. 4.* but it shall wax old like a garment, that will be the worse for wearing; and they that dwell therein, all the inhabitants of the earth, even those that seem to have the best settlement in it, shall die in like manner; the soul shall, as to this world, vanish like smoke, and the body be thrown by like a garment waxen old; they shall die like a house, so some of the critics read it; easily crushed, *Job. iv. 19.* and no loss of them. But when heaven and earth pass away, when all flesh and the glory of it wither as grass, the word of the Lord endures for ever, and not one iota or tittle of that shall fall to the ground. Those whose happiness is bound up in Christ's righteousness and salvation, will have the comfort of it, when time and days shall be no more.

2. What use they are to make of this comfort: if God's righteousness and salvation are near to them, then let them not fear the reproach of men, of mortal miserable men, nor be afraid of their reviling or spiteful taunts, their's that bid you sing them the songs of Zion, or that ask you in scorn, where is now your God? let not those who embrace the gospel-righteousness be afraid of those who will call them Beelzebub, and will say all manner of evil against them falsely; let them not be afraid of them, let them not be disturbed by these opprobrious speeches, nor made uneasy by them, as if they would be the ruin of their reputation and honour, and they must for ever lie under the load of them. Let them not be afraid of their executing their menaces, nor be deterred thereby from their duty, or frightened into any sinful compliances, to driven or take any indirect courses for their own safety. Those can bear but little for Christ, that cannot bear a hard word for him. Let us not fear the reproach of men; for, (1.) They will be quickly silenced, ver. 8. *The moth shall eat them up like a garment*, chap. l. 9. *The worm shall eat them up like wool*, or woollen cloth. If we have the approbation of a living God, we may despise the censure of dying men; the matter is not great what they say of us, who must be worms-meat shortly. Or it intimates the judgments of God with which they shall be visited, with which they shall be consumed, for their malice against the people of God; they shall be slowly and silently but effectually destroyed, when God shall come to reckon with them for all their hard speeches, *Jude 14, 15.* (2.)

The cause we suffer for cannot be run down; the falsehood of their reproaches will be detected, but truth shall triumph; and the righteousness of religion's injured cause shall be for ever plain. Clouds darken the sun, but give no obstruction to his progress.

9. ¶ Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? 10. Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? 11. Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. 12. I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? 13. And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? 14. The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. 15. But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name. 16. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

In these verses we have,

1. A prayer that God would in his providence appear and act for the deliverance of his people, and the mortification of his and their enemies; Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, ver. 9. The arm of the Lord is Christ, or it is put for God himself, as Psalm xlv. 23. Awake, why sleepest thou? He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but when we pray that he would awake, we mean, that he would make it to appear he watched over his people, and is always awake to do them good. The arm of the Lord is said to awake, when the power of God exerts itself with more than ordinary vigour on his people's behalf. When a hand or an arm is benumbed we say it is asleep, when it is stretched forth for action it awakes. God needs not to be reminded or excited by us, but he gives us leave thus to be humbly earnest with him for such appearances of his power as will be for his own praise. Put on strength, i. e. put forth strength: appear in thy strength, as we appear in the clothes we put on, Psalm xxi. 13. The church fees her case bad, her enemies many and mighty, her friends few and feeble, and therefore depends purely upon the strength of God's arm for her relief. Awake, as in the ancient days, i. e. do for us now as thou didst for our fathers formerly, repeat the wonders they told us of, Judges vi. 13.

2. The pleas to enforce this prayer; (1.) They plead precedents, the experiences of their ancestors, and the great things God had done for them. Let the arm of the Lord be made bare on our behalf, for it has done great things formerly in defence of the same cause, and we are sure it is neither shortened nor weakened: it did wonders against the Egyptians, that enslaved and oppressed God's Son, his first-born; it cut Rahab to pieces with one direful plague after another; and wounded Pharaoh, the dragon, the Leviathan as he is called, Psalm lxxiv. 13, 14. gave him his death's wound. It did wonders for Israel; it dried up the sea, even the waters of the great deep, as far as was requisite to open a way through the sea for the ransomed to pass over, ver. 10. God is never at a loss for a way to accomplish his purposes concerning his people, but will either find one or make one. And past experiences, as they are great supports to faith and hope, so they are good pleas in prayer; Thou hast; wilt thou not? Psalm lxxxv. 1—6. (2.) They plead promises, ver. 11. And the redeemed of the Lord shall return; i. e. (as it may be supplied) Thou hast said they shall; referring to Isaiah xxxv. 10. where we find this promise, that the redeemed of the Lord, when they are released out of their captivity in Babylon, shall come with singing unto Zion. Sinners when they are brought out of the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of God's children, may come singing, as a bird got loose out of the cage. The souls of believers when they are delivered out of the prison of the body, come to the heavenly Zion with singing. Then this promise will have its full accomplishment, and we may plead it in the mean time; he that designs such joys for us at last, will he not work such deliverance for us in the mean time as our case requires? When the saints come to heaven they enter into the joy of the Lord, it crowns their heads with immortal honour, it fills their hearts with complete satisfaction; they shall obtain that joy and gladness which they could never obtain in this vale of tears. In this world of changes it is a short step from joy to sorrow, but in that world sorrow and mourning shall flee away, never to return or come in view again.

3. The answer immediately given to this prayer, ver. 12. I, even I, am he that comforteth you. They prayed for the operations of his power, he answers them with the consolations of his grace, which may well be accepted as an equivalent. If God do not wound the dragon and dry the sea as formerly, yet if he comfort us in soul under our afflictions, we have no reason to complain. If God do not answer presently with the saving strength of his right hand, we must be thankful if he answers us, as an angel himself was answered, Zechariah i. 13. with good words and comfortable words. See how God resolves to comfort his people, I, even I, will do it; he had ordered his ministers to do it, chap. xl. 1. but because they cannot reach the heart, he takes the work into his own hands, I, even I, will do it. See how he glories in it; he takes it among the titles of his honour to be the God that comforteth them that are cast down; he delights in being so. Those whom God comforteth, they are comforted indeed; nay, his undertaking to comfort them is comfort enough to them.

1. He comforts those that were in fear; and fear has torment which calls for comfort; that fear of man hath a snare in it which we have need of comfort to preserve us from. He comforts the timorous by chiding them, and that is no improper way of comforting either others or ourselves; Why art thou cast down, and why disquieted? ver. 12, 13. God that comforts

his people, would not have them disquiet themselves with amazing, perplexing fears, either of the reproach of men, ver. 7. or of their growing, threatening power and greatness, or of any mischief they may intend against us or our people. Observe,

(1.) The absurdity of those fears; it is a disparagement to us to give way to them; Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid? In the original the pronoun is feminine, Who art thou, O woman? unworthy the name of a man, such a weak and womanish thing it is to give way to perplexing fears.

(1.) It is absurd to be in such dread of a dying man; What! afraid of a man that shall die? shall certainly and shortly die? of the sin of man which shall be made as grass? shall wither and be trodden down, or eaten up? The greatest men, and the most formidable, that are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, yet are but men, Psalm ix. 20. and shall die like men, Psalm lxxxii. 7. are but grass sprung out of the earth, cleaving to it, and retiring again in it. Note, We ought to look upon every man as a man that shall die. Those we admire, and love, and trust to, they are men that shall die; let us not therefore delight too much in them, nor depend too much upon them. Those we fear we must look upon them as frail and mortal, and consider what a foolish thing it is for the servants of the living God to be afraid of dying men, that are here to-day and gone to-morrow.

(2.) It is absurd to fear continually every day, ver. 13. to put ourselves upon a constant rack, so as never to be easy nor have any enjoyment of ourselves. Now and then a danger may be imminent and threatening, and it may be prudence to fear it; but to be always in a toss, jealous of dangers at every step, and to tremble at the shaking of every leaf, is to make ourselves all our life-time subject to bondage, Heb. ii. 15. and to bring upon ourselves that sore judgment which is threatened, Deut. xxviii. 66, 67. Thou shalt fear day and night.

(2.) It is absurd to fear beyond what there is cause. Thou art afraid of the fury of the oppressor; it is true there is an oppressor, and he is furious, and he designs it may be when he has an opportunity, to do thee a mischief, and it will be thy wisdom therefore to stand upon thy guard; but thou art afraid of him, as if he were to destroy, as if he were just now going to cut thy throat, and as if there were no possibility of preventing it. A timorous spirit is thus apt to make the worst of every thing, and to apprehend the danger greater and nearer than really it is. And sometimes God is pleased presently to shew us the folly of it, Where is the fury of the oppressor? It is gone in an instant, and the danger is over ere thou art aware. His heart is turned, or his hands are tied: Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, and the king of Babylon no more. What is gone with all the furious oppressors of God's Israel, that he feared them, and threatened them, and were a terror to them? they passed away, and so they were not; and so shall these.

(2.) The impiety of those fears. Thou art afraid of a man that shall die and forgettest the Lord thy maker, who is also the Maker of all the world, who hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and therefore hath all the hosts and all the powers of both at his command and dispose. Note, Our inordinate fearing of man is an implicit forgetting of God. When we disquiet ourselves with the fear of man, we forget that there is a God above him, and that the greatest of men have no power but what is given them from above; we forget the providence of God, by which he orders and over-rules all events according to the counsel of his own will; we forget the promises he has made to protect his people, and the experiences we have had of his care concerning us, and his seasonable interposal for our relief many a time, when we thought the oppressor ready to destroy; we forget our Jehovah-jireh's monuments of mercy in the mount of the Lord. Did we remember to make God our fear and our dread, we should not be so much afraid as we are of the frowns of men, 1st. Luke xii. 12, 13. Happy is the man that fears God always, Prov. xxviii. 14. Luke xii. 4, 5.

2. He comforts those that were in bonds, ver. 14, 15. See here, (1.) What they do for themselves; The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and may return to his own country, from which he is banished; his care is, that he may not die in the pit, not die a prisoner, through the inconveniences of his confinement; and that his bread should not fail, either the bread he should have to keep him alive in prison, or that which should bear his charges home; his stock is low, and therefore he hasteth to be loosed. Now some understand this as his fault, he is distrustfully impatient of delays, cannot wait God's time, but thinks he is undone, and must die in the pit if he be not released presently; others take it to be his praise, that when the doors are thrown open he doth not linger, but applies himself with all diligence to procure his discharge; and then it follows, But I am the Lord thy God, which intimates, (2.) What God will do for them, even that which they cannot do for themselves. God hath all power in his hand to help the captive exiles; for he hath divided the sea, when the roaring of its waves was more frightful than any of the impotent menaces of proud oppressors: He hath stilled or quieted the sea, so some think it should be read, Psalm lxxv. 7.—lxxxix. 9. This is not only a proof of what God can do, but a resemblance of what he has done and will do for his people; he will find out a way to still the threatening storm, and bring them safe into the harbour; The Lord of hosts is his name, his name for ever; the name by which his people have long known him. And as he is able to help them, so he is willing and engaged to do it; for he is thy God, O captive exile! thine in covenant. This is a check to the desponding captives; let them not conclude that they must either be loosed presently, or die in the pit; for he that is the Lord of hosts can relieve them when they are brought never so low. It is also an encouragement to the diligent captives, who, when liberty is proclaimed, are willing to lose no time; let them know that the Lord is their God, and while they thus strive to help themselves they may be sure he will help them.

3. He comforts all his people who depended upon what the prophets said to them in the name of the Lord, and built their hopes upon it. When the deliverances which the prophets spake of, either did not come so soon as they looked for them, or did not come up to the height of their expectation, they began to be cast down in their own eyes; but as to this they are encouraged, ver. 16. by what God said to his prophet, not to this only, but to all his prophets, nor to this or them principally, but to Christ the great prophet. It is a great satisfaction to those to whom the message is sent, to see the God of truth and power say to his messenger, as he doth here, I have put my words in thy mouth, that by them I might plant the heavens. God undertook to comfort his people, ver. 12. but still he doth it by his prophets, by his gospel: and that he might do it by these, he here tells us, (1.) That his word in them is very true: He owns what they had said to be what he had directed and enjoined them to say; I have put my words in thy mouth, and therefore he that receives thee and them receives me. This is a great stay to our faith, that Christ's doctrine was not his, but his that sent him; and that the words of the prophets and apostles were God's words, which he put into their mouths: God's Spirit not only revealed to them the things themselves they spoke of, but dictated to them the words they should speak, 2 Pet. i. 21. 1 Cor. ii. 13. so that these are the true sayings of God, of a God that cannot lie. (2.) That it is very safe: I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, as before, chap. xlix. 2. which speaks the special protection not only of the prophets, but of their prophecies; not only

he designs for his church are sure and near, very near and very sure, ver. 4—6. (3.) That the persecutors of the church are weak and dying creatures, ver. 7, 8. (4.) That the same power which did wonders for the church formerly is now engaged and employed for her protection and deliverance, ver. 2—11. (5.) That God himself the maker of the world had undertaken both to deliver his people out of their distress, and to comfort them under it, and sent his prophet to assure them of it, ver. 12—16. (6.) That as deplorable as the condition of the church now was, ver. 17—20, to the same woful circumstances her persecutors and oppressors should shortly be reduced, and worse, ver. 20—23. The three first paragraphs of this chapter begin with, *hearken unto me*, and they are God's people that are all along called to hearken; for even when comforts are spoken to them, sometimes they hearken not through anguish of spirit, *Ezra. vi. 9.* therefore they are again and again called to hearken, ver. 1—1—7. The two other paragraphs of this chapter begin with *awake, awake*; in the former, ver. 9. God's people call upon him to awake and help them; in the latter, ver. 17. God calls upon them to awake and help themselves.

1. **H**EARKEN to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD; look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. 2. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. 3. For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

Observe, (1.) How the people of God are here described, to whom the word of this consolation is sent, and who are called upon to hearken to it, ver. 1. They are such as follow after righteousness, that are very solicitous and very desirous both to be justified, and to be sanctified, are pressing hard after this, to have the favour of God restored to them, and the image of God renewed on them. These are they that seek the Lord, for it is only in the way of righteousness that we can seek him with any hopes of finding him.

2. How they are here directed to look back to their original, and the smallness of their beginning: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, the idolatrous family in Ur of the Chaldees, out of which Abraham was taken, the generation of slaves which the heads and fathers of their tribes were in Egypt; look unto the hole of the pit out of which ye are digged, as clay, when God formed you into a people. Note, It is good for those that are privileged by a new birth, to consider what they were by their first birth; how they were conceived in iniquity and shapen in sin: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; how hard was that rock out of which we were hewn, unapt to receive impressions; and how dirty the hole of the pit out of which we were digged! The consideration hereof should fill us with low thoughts of ourselves, and high thoughts of divine grace. Those that are now advanced would do well to remember how low they began, ver. 2. Look unto Abraham your father, the father of all the faithful, of all that follow after the righteousness of faith as he did, *Rom. iv. 11.* And unto Sarah that bare you, and whose daughters you all are as long as you do well; think how Abraham was called alone, and yet was blessed and multiplied; and let that encourage all believers to depend upon the promise of God, even when a sentence of death seems to be upon all the means that leads to the performance of it. Particularly let it encourage the captives in Babylon, though they are reduced to a small number and few of them left, to hope that yet they should increase so as to replenish their own land again. When Jacob is very small, yet he is not so small as Abraham was, who yet became father of many nations. Look unto Abraham, and see what ye got by trusting in the promise of God, and take example by him to follow God with an implicit faith.

3. How they are assured that their present seediness of tears should end in a harvest of joys at length, ver. 3. The church of God on earth, even the gospel of Zion, hath sometimes had her deserts and waste places; many parts of the church, either through corruption or persecution, made like a wilderness, unfruitful to God, or uncomfortable to the inhabitants; but God will find out a true and way to comfort Zion, not only by speaking comfortably to her, but by acting graciously for her. God has comforts in store even for the waste places of his church, for those parts of it that seem nor regarded or valued. (1.) He will make them fruitful, and so give them cause to rejoice; her wilderness shall put on a new face, and look pleasant as Eden, and abound in all good fruits as the garden of the Lord. Note, It is the greatest comfort of the church to be made serviceable to the glory of God, and to be as his garden in which he delights. (2.) He will make them cheerful, and so give them hearts to rejoice: with the fruits of righteousness, joy and gladness shall be found therein; for the more holiness men have, and the more good they do, the more gladness they have. And where there is joy and gladness to their satisfaction, it is fit there should be thanksgiving to God's honour; for whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and the returns of God's favour ought to be celebrated with the voice of melody; which will be the more melodious, when God gives songs in the night, songs in the desert.

4. ¶ Harken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. 5. My righteousness is near: my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arms shall they trust. 6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. 7. ¶ Harken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men; neither be ye afraid of their revilings. 8. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteous-

ness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Both these proclamations, as I may call them, end alike with an assurance of the perpetuity of God's righteousness, and his salvation, and therefore we put them together, both being designed for the comfort of God's people, Observe,

1. Who are they to whom this comfort belongs: my people and my nation, that I have set apart for myself, that own me, and are owned by me. Those are God's people and his nation, who are subject to him as their King and their God, pay allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection accordingly. They are a people that know righteousness not only have the means of knowledge, and to whom righteousness is made known, but improve those means, and are able to form a right judgment of truth and falsehood, good and evil. And as they have good heads, so they have good hearts, for they have the law of God in them, written and ruling there. Those God owns for his people, in whose heart his law is. Even those that know righteousness, and have the law of God in their heart, may yet be in great distress and sorrow, and loaded with reproach and contempt; but their God will comfort them with the righteousness they know, and the law they have in their hearts.

2. What the comfort is, that belong to God's people:

(1.) That the gospel of Christ shall be preached and published to the world; a law shall proceed from me, an evangelical law, the law of Christ, the law of faith, *1st. ii. 3.* This law is his judgment, for it is that law of liberty by which the world shall be governed and judged; this shall not only go forth, but shall continue and rest, it shall take firm footing and deep root in the world; it shall rest not only for the benefit of the Jews, that had the first notice of it, but for a light to the people of other nations. It is this law, this judgment, that we are required to hearken and give ear to at our peril; for how shall we escape if we neglect it, and turn a deaf ear to it? when a law proceeds from God, *He that has ears to hear let him hear.*

(2.) That this law and judgment shall bring with it righteousness and salvation shall open a ready way to the children of men how they may be justified and saved, ver. 5. It is called God's righteousness and his salvation, because of his contriving and bringing it about: it is a righteousness that he will accept for us and accept us for; and a righteousness which he will work in us and graciously accept of: it is the salvation of the Lord, for it ariseth from him and terminates in him. Observe, There is no salvation without righteousness; and wherever there is the righteousness of God there shall be his salvation. All those, and those only, that are justified and sanctified shall be glorified.

(3.) That this righteousness and salvation shall very shortly appear: it is near, it is gone forth; the decree is gone forth concerning it, it shall as certainly be introduced as if it were gone forth already, and the time for it is at hand. It is near in time; behold all things are now ready; it is near in place, not far to seek, but the word is nigh us, and Christ in the word, righteousness in the word, *Rom. x. 8.*

(4.) That this evangelical righteousness and salvation shall not be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall be extended to the Gentiles; mine arms shall judge the people. Those that will not yield to the judgments of God's mouth, shall be crushed by the judgments of his hand. Some shall thus be judged by the gospel, for judgment Christ came into this world; but others and those of the isles shall wait upon him, and bid his gospel, and the commands, as well as the comforts of it, welcome. It was a comfort to God's people, to his nations, that multitudes should be added to them, and the increase of their number should be the increase of their strength and beauty. It is added, and on mine arm shall they trust, that arm of the Lord, which is revealed in Christ, *1st. liii. 1.* Observe, God's arm shall judge the people that are impenitent, and yet on his arm shall others trust, and be saved by it; for it is to us as we make it a favour of life or death.

(5.) That this righteousness and salvation shall be for ever, and shall never be abolished, ver. 8. It is an everlasting righteousness that the Messiah brings in, *Dan. ix. 24.* an eternal redemption that he is the author of, *Heb. v. 9.* As it shall spread through all the nations of the earth, so it shall last through all the ages of the world. We must never expect any other way of salvation, any other covenant of peace, or rule of righteousness, but what we have in the gospel, and what we have there shall continue to the end, *Mat. xxviii. 20.* It is for ever, for the consequence of it shall be to eternity; and by this law of liberty men's everlasting state will be determined. This perpetuity of the gospel, and the blessed things it brings in, is illustrated by the fading and perishing of this world, and all things in it. Look up to the visible heavens above, which have continued hitherto, and seem likely to continue, but they shall vanish like smoke that soon spends itself and disappears; they shall be rolled like a scroll, and their lights shall fall like leaves in autumn: look down to the earth beneath, that abideth too short for ever, *Eccles. i. 4.* but it shall wax old like a garment, that will be the worse for wearing; and they that dwell therein, all the inhabitants of the earth, even those that seem to have the best settlement in it, shall die in like manner; the soul shall, as to this world, vanish like smoke, and the body be thrown by like a garment waxen old; they shall die like a house, so some of the critics read it; easily crushed, *Job iv. 19.* and no loss of them. But when heaven and earth pass away, when all flesh and the glory of it wither as grass, the word of the Lord endures for ever, and not one iota or little of that shall fall to the ground. Those whose happiness is bound up in Christ's righteousness and salvation, will have the comfort of it, when time and days shall be no more.

2. What use they are to make of this comfort: if God's righteousness and salvation are near to them, then let them not fear the reproach of men, of mortal miserable men, nor be afraid of their reviling or spiteful taunts, their's that bid you sing them the songs of Zion, or that ask you in scorn, where is now your God? let not those who embrace the gospel-righteousness be afraid of those who will call them Beelzebub, and will say all manner of evil against them falsely; let them not be afraid of them, let them not be disturbed by these opprobrious speeches, nor made uneasy by them, as if they would be the ruin of their reputation and honour, and they must for ever lie under the load of them. Let them not be afraid of their executing their menaces, nor be deterred thereby from their duty, or frightened into any sinful compliances, to driven or take any indirect courses for their own safety. Those can bear but little for Christ, that cannot bear a hard word for him. Let us not fear the reproach of men; for, (1.) They will be quickly silenced, ver. 8. The moth shall eat them up like a garment, chap. l. 9. The worm shall eat them up like wool, or woollen cloth. If we have the approbation of a living God, we may despise the censure of dying men; the matter is not great what they say of us, who must be worms-meat shortly. Or it intimates the judgments of God with which they shall be visited, with which they shall be consumed, for their malice against the people of God; they shall be slowly and silently but effectually destroyed, when God shall come to reckon with them for all their hard speeches, *Jude 14, 15.* (2.)

The cause we suffer for cannot be run down; the falsehood of their reproaches will be detected, but truth shall triumph; and the righteousness of religion's injured cause shall be for ever plain. Clouds darken the sun, but give no obstruction to his progress.

9. ¶ Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. *Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?* 10. *Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?* 11. Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. 12. I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who *art thou*, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? 13. And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? 14. The captive exile hasteneth that he may be looted, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. 15. But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name. 16. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, *Thou art my people.*

In these verses we have,

1. A prayer that God would in his providence appear and act for the deliverance of his people, and the mortification of his and their enemies; *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord*, ver. 9. The arm of the Lord is Christ, or it is put for God himself, as *Psal. xlv. 23. Awake, why sleepest thou?* He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but when we pray that he would awake, we mean, that he would make it to appear he watched over his people, and is always awake to do them good. The arm of the Lord is said to awake, when the power of God exerts itself with more than ordinary vigour on his people's behalf. When a hand or an arm is benumbed we say it is asleep, when it is stretched forth for action it awakes. God needs not to be reminded or excited by us, but he gives us leave thus to be humbly earnest with him for such appearances of his power as will be for his own praise. Put on strength, i. e. put forth strength: appear in thy strength, as we appear in the clothes we put on, *Psal. xxi. 13.* The church sees her case bad, her enemies many and mighty, her friends few and feeble, and therefore depends purely upon the strength of God's arm for her relief. *Awake, as in the ancient days*, i. e. do for us now as thou didst for our fathers formerly, repeat the wonders they told us of, *Judges vi. 13.*

2. The pleas to enforce this prayer; (1.) They plead precedents, the experiences of their ancestors, and the great things God had done for them. Let the arm of the Lord be made bare on our behalf, for it has done great things formerly in defence of the same cause, and we are sure it is neither shamed nor weakened: it did wonders against the Egyptians, that enslaved and oppressed God's Son, his first-born; it cut Rahab to pieces with one direful plague after another; and wounded Pharaoh, the dragon, the Leviathan as he is called, *1st. lxxiv. 13, 14.* gave him his death's wound. It did wonders for Israel; it dried up the sea, even the waters of the great deep, as far as was requisite to open a way through the sea for the ransomed to pass over, ver. 10. God is never at a loss for a way to accomplish his purposes concerning his people, but will either find one or make one. And past experiences, as they are great supports to faith and hope, so they are good pleas in prayer, *Thou hast; Wilt thou not?* *Psal. lxxxv. 1—6.* (2.) They plead promises, ver. 11. *And the redeemed of the Lord shall return*; i. e. (as it may be supplied *Thou hast said they shall*; referring to *Isa. xxv. 10.* where we find this promise, that the redeemed of the Lord, when they are released out of their captivity in Babylon, shall come with singing unto Zion. Sinners when they are brought out of the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of God's children, may come singing, as a bird got loose out of the cage. The souls of believers when they are delivered out of the prison of the body, come to the heavenly Zion with singing. Then this promise will have its full accomplishment, and we may plead it in the mean time; he that designs such joys for us at last, will he not work such deliverance for us in the mean time as our case requires? When the saints come to heaven they enter into the joy of the Lord, it crowns their heads with immortal honour, it fills their hearts with complete satisfaction; they shall obtain that joy and gladness which they could never obtain in this vale of tears. In this world of changes it is a short step from joy to sorrow, but in that world sorrow and mourning shall flee away, never to return or come in view again.

3. The answer immediately given to their prayer, ver. 12. *I, even I, am he that comforteth you.* They prayed for the operations of his power, he answers them with the consolations of his grace, which may well be accepted as an equivalent. If God do not wound the dragon and dry the sea as formerly, yet if he comfort us in soul under our afflictions, we have no reason to complain. If God do not answer presently with the saving strength of his right hand, we must be thankful if he answers us, as an angel himself was answered, *Zeck. i. 13.* with good words and comfortable words. See how God resolves to comfort his people, *I, even I, will do it*; he had ordered his ministers to do it, chap. xl. 1. but because they cannot reach the heart, he takes the work into his own hands, *I, even I, will do it.* See how he glorifies in it; he takes it among the titles of his honour to be the God that comforteth them that are cast down; he delights in being so. Those whom God comforteth, they are comforted indeed; nay, his undertaking to comfort them is comfort enough to them.

1. He comforts those that were in fear; and fear has torment which calls for comfort; that fear of man hath a snare in it which we have need of comfort to preserve us from. He comforts the timorous by chiding them, and that is no improper way of comforting either others or ourselves; *Why art thou cast down, and why disquieted?* ver. 12, 13. God that comforts

his people, would not have them disquiet themselves with amazing, perplexing fears, either of the reproach of men, ver. 7. or of their growing, threatening power and greatness, or of any mischief they may intend against us or our people. Observe,

(1.) The absurdity of those fears; it is a disparagement to us to give way to them; *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid?* In the original the pronoun is feminine, *Who art thou, O woman?* unworthy the name of a man, such a weak and womanish thing it is to give way to perplexing fears.

(1.) It is absurd to be in such dread of a dying man; *What! afraid of a man that shall die?* shall certainly and shortly die? of the son of man which shall be made as grass? shall wither and be trodden down, or eaten up? The greatest men, and the most formidable, that are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, yet are but men, *Psal. ix. 20.* and shall die like men, *Psal. lxxxii. 7.* are but grass sprung out of the earth, cleaving to it, and retiring again in it. Note, We ought to look upon every man as a man that shall die. Those we admire, and love, and trust to, they are men that shall die; let us not therefore delight too much in them, nor depend too much upon them. Those we fear we must look upon them as frail and mortal, and consider what a foolish thing it is for the servants of the living God to be afraid of dying men, that are here to-day and gone to-morrow.

(2.) It is absurd to fear continually every day, ver. 13. to put ourselves upon a constant rack, to as never to be easy nor have any enjoyment of ourselves. Now and then a danger may be imminent and threatening, and it may be prudence to fear it; but to be always in a toss, jealous of dangers at every step, and to tremble at the shaking of every leaf, is to make ourselves all our life-time subject to bondage, *Heb. ii. 15.* and to bring upon ourselves that sore judgment which is threatened, *Deut. xxviii. 65, 67. Thou shalt fear day and night.* (2.) It is absurd to fear beyond what there is cause.

Thou art afraid of the fury of the oppressor; it is true there is an oppressor, and he is furious, and he designs it may be when he has an opportunity, to do thee a mischief, and it will be thy wisdom therefore to stand upon thy guard; but thou art afraid of him, as if he were to destroy, as if he were just now going to cut thy throat, and as if there were no possibility of preventing it. A timorous spirit is thus apt to make the worst of every thing, and to apprehend the danger greater and nearer than really it is. And sometimes God is pleased presently to shew us the folly of it, *Where is the fury of the oppressor?* It is gone in an instant, and the danger is over ere thou art aware. His heart is turned, or his hands are tied; *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise*, and the king of Babylon no more. What is gone with all the furious oppressors of God's Israel, that hector them, and threatened them, and were a terror to them? they passed away, and so they were not; and so shall these.

(2.) The impiety of those fears. Thou art afraid of a man that shall die and forgettest the Lord thy maker, who is also the Maker of all the world, who hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and therefore hath all the hosts and all the powers of both at his command and dispose. Note, Our inordinate fearing of man is an implicit forgetting of God. When we disquiet ourselves with the fear of man, we forget that there is a God above him, and that the greatest of men have no power but what is given them from above; we forget the providence of God, by which he orders and over-rules all events according to the counsel of his own will; we forget the promises he has made to protect his people, and the experiences we have had of his care concerning us, and his reasonable interposal for our relief many a time, when we thought the oppressor ready to destroy; we forget our Jehovah-jireh's monuments of mercy in the mount of the Lord. Did we remember to make God our fear and our dread, we should not be so much afraid as we are of the frowns of men, *Isa. viii. 12, 13.* Happy is the man that fears God always, *Prov. xxviii. 14. Luke xii. 4, 5.*

2. He comforts those that were in bonds, ver. 14, 15. See here, (1.) What they do for themselves; *The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed*, and may return to his own country, from which he is banished; his care is, that he may not die in the pit, not die a prisoner, through the inconveniences of his confinement; and that his bread should not fail, either the bread he should have to keep him alive in prison, or that which should bear his charges home; his stock is low, and therefore he hasteth to be loosed. Now some understand this as his fault, he is distrustfully impatient of delays, cannot wait God's time, but thinks he is undone, and must die in the pit if he be not released presently; others take it to be his praise, that when the doors are thrown open he doth not linger, but applies himself with all diligence to procure his discharge; and then it follows, *But I am the Lord thy God*, which intimates, (2.) What God will do for them, even that which they cannot do for themselves. God hath all power in his hand to help the captive exiles; for he hath divided the sea, when the roaring of its waves was more frightful than any of the impotent menaces of proud oppressors: He hath stilled or quieted the sea, so some think it should be read, *Psal. lxxv. 7.—lxxxix. 9.* This is not only a proof of what God can do, but a resemblance of what he has done and will do for his people; he will find out a way to still the threatening storm, and bring them safe into the harbour; *The Lord of hosts is his name*, his name for ever; the name by which his people have long known him. And as he is able to help them, so he is willing and engaged to do it; for he is thy God, O captive exile! thine in covenant. This is a check to the desponding captives; let them not conclude that they must either be loosed presently, or die in the pit; for he that is the Lord of hosts can relieve them when they are brought never so low. It is also an encouragement to the diligent captives, who, when liberty is proclaimed, are willing to lose no time; let them know that the Lord is their God, and while they thus strive to help themselves they may be sure he will help them.

3. He comforts all his people who depended upon what the prophets said to them in the name of the Lord, and built their hopes upon it. When the deliverances which the prophets spake of, either did not come so soon as they looked for them, or did not come up to the height of their expectation, they began to be cast down in their own eyes; but as to this they are encouraged, ver. 16. by what God said to his prophet, not to this only, but to all his prophets, nor to this or them principally, but to Christ the great prophet. It is a great satisfaction to those to whom the message is sent, to hear the God of truth and power say to his messenger, as he doth here, *I have put my words in thy mouth*, that by them I might plant the heavens. God undertook to comfort his people, ver. 12. but still he doth it by his prophets, by his gospel: and that he might do it by these, he here tells us, (1.) That his word in them is very true: He owns what they had said to be what he had directed and enjoined them to say; *I have put my words in thy mouth*, and therefore he that receives thee and them receives me. This is a great stay to our faith, that Christ's doctrine was not his, but his that sent him; and that the words of the prophets and apostles were God's words, which he put into their mouths: God's spirit not only revealed to them the things themselves they spoke of, but dictated to them the words they should speak, *2 Pet. i. 21. 1 Cor. ii. 13.* so that these are the true sayings of God, of a God that cannot lie. (2.) That it is very safe: I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, as before, chap. xlix. 2. which speaks the special protection not only of the prophets, but of their prophecies; not only

of Christ, but of Christianity, of the gospel of Christ; it is not only the faithful word of God which the prophets deliver to us, but it shall be carefully preserved till it have its accomplishment for the use of the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of the powers of darkness to extinguish this light. They shall *prophecy again*, Rev. x. 11. though not in their persons, yet in their writings, which God has always covered in the shadow of his hand, preserved by a special providence, else they had been lost ere this. (3.) That this word, when it comes to be accomplished will be very great, and will not at all fall short of the pomp and grandeur of the prophecy; *I have put my words in thy mouth*, not that by the performance of them I may plant a nation, or found a city, but plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth, may do that for my people which will be a new creation. This must look as far forward as to the great work done by the gospel of Christ, and the setting up of his holy religion in the world. As God by Christ made the world at first, Heb. i. 2. and by him formed the Old Testament church, Zech. vi. 12. so by him, and the words put into his mouth, he will set up, (1.) A new world, will again plant the heavens, and found the earth: So having put the whole creation into disorder, Christ's taking away the sin of the world put all into order again, *old things are passed away, all things are become new*; things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled, and to put into a new posture, Col. i. 20. And through him, according to the promise, *we look for new heavens, and a new earth*, 2. Pet. iii. 17. and to this the prophets bear witness. (2.) He will set up a new church, a New Testament church, *He will say unto Zion, Thou art my people*. The gospel church is called Zion, Heb. xii. 22. and Jerusalem, Gal. iv. 26. And when the Gentiles are brought into it, it shall be said unto them, *Ye are my people*. When God works great deliverances for his church, and especially when he shall complete the salvation of it in the great day, he will thereby own that poor, despised handmaid, to be his people, whom he hath chosen and loved.

17. ¶ Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. 18. There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up. 19. These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee? 20. Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God. 21. ¶ Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine: 22. Thus saith thy Lord, the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: 23. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

God having awoke for the comfort of his people, here calls upon them to awake, as afterwards, chap. lii. 1. It is a call to awake not so much out of their sleep of sin, though that also is necessary in order to their being ready for deliverance, as out of the stupor of despair. When the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in captivity, they, as well as those who remained upon the spot, were so overwhelmed with the sense of their troubles, that they had no heart or spirit to mind any thing that tended to their comfort and relief; they were as the disciples in the garden, *sleeping for sorrow*, Luke xxi. 45. and therefore when the deliverance came, they are said to be like them that dream, Plal. cxxvi. 1. Nay, it is a call to awake, not only from sleep, but from death, like that to the dry bones to live, Ezek. xxxvii. 9. Awake, and look about thee, that thou mayest see the day of thy deliverance dawn, and mayest be ready to bid it welcome: recover thy senses, sink not under thy load, but stand up and bestir myself for thine own help. This may be applied to the Jerusalem that was in the apostle's time, which is said to be *in bondage with her children*, Gal. iv. 25. and to have been under the power of *spirit of slumber*, Rom. xi. 8. they are called to awake and mind the things that belonged to their everlasting peace, and then the cup of trembling should be taken out of their hands, and peace should be spoken to them; and they should triumph over Satan, who had blinded their eyes and lulled them asleep. Now,

1. It is owned, that Jerusalem had long been in a very deplorable condition, and sunk into the depths of misery.

(1.) She had lain under the tokens of God's displeasure; he had put into her hand the cup of his fury, i. e. her share of his displeasure; the dispensations of his providence concerning her, had been such as she had reason to think he was angry with her: She had provoked him to anger most bitterly, and was made to taste the bitter fruits of it. The cup of God's fury is and will be a cup of trembling to all those that have it put into their hands: Damned sinners will find it so to eternity. It is said, *Psalm lxxv. 8. that the dregs of the cup, the loathsome sediments in the bottom of it, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them*; but here Jerusalem having made herself as the wicked of the earth, is compelled to wring them out and drink them; for wherever there has been a cup of fermentation, as there had been in Jerusalem's hand, when she was idolatrous, sooner or later there will be cup of fury, a cup of trembling: Therefore stand up, awake and sin not.

(2.) Those that should have helped her in her distress failed her, and were either unable or unwilling to help her, as might have been expected, ver. 18. She is intoxicated with the cup of God's fury, and, being so, staggers, and is very unsteady in her counsels and attempts; she knows not what she saith or doth, much less knows she what to say or do: And in this unhappy condition, of all the sons that she hath brought forth and brought up, that she hath born and educated (and there were many famous ones, for of Zion it was said, *That this and that man was born there*, Psalm lxxxvii. 5.) there is none to guide her, none to take her by the hand, to keep her either from falling or from flaming herself, either to lend a hand to help her out of her trouble, or lend a tongue to comfort her under it. Think it not strange, if wife and good men are disappointed in their children, and have not that succour from them which they expected, but those that were arrows in their hand prove arrows in their heart, when Jerusalem

herself hath none of all her sons, either prince, priest, or prophet, that hath such a sense either of duty or gratitude, as to help her when she had most need of help. Thus they complain, *Psalm lxxiv. 9. There is none to tell us how long*.

Now that which aggravated this disappointment was,

1. That her trouble was very great, and yet there was none to pity or help her: *These two things are come unto thee*, ver. 19. to complete thy desolation and destruction, even the famine and the sword, two sore judgments, and very terrible: Or the two things were the desolation and destruction by which the city was wasted, and the famine and sword by which the citizens perished: Or the two things were, the trouble itself, made up of desolation, destruction, famine, and sword, and her being helpless, forlorn, and comfortless under it. Two sad things indeed, to be in this woeful case, and to have none to pity thee, to sympathize with thee in thy griefs, or to help to bear the burden of thy cares; to have none to comfort thee, by suggesting that to thee which might help to alleviate thy grief, or doing that for thee which might help to redress thy grievances. Or, these two things that were come upon Jerusalem, are the same with the two things that were afterwards to come upon Babylon, chap. xlvii. 9. *Lays of children and widowhood*; piteous cases, and yet when thou hast brought it upon thyself by thine own sin and folly, who shall be sorry for thee? Cases that call for comfort, and yet when thou art froward under thy trouble, frettest, and maddest thyself uneasy, *by whom shall I comfort thee?* They that will not be counselled cannot be helped.

2. That those who should have been her comforters were their own tormentors, ver. 20. *They have fainted*, as quite dispirited, and driven to despair; they have no patience in which to keep possession of their own souls, and the enjoyment of themselves, nor any confidence in God's promise, by which to keep possession of the comfort of that: They throw themselves up in the ground in vexation at their troubles, and there they lie at the head of all the streets, complaining to all that pass by, Lam. i. 12. pining away for want of necessary food; there they lie like a wild bull in a net, fretting and raging, struggling and pulling in vain, to help themselves, but engaging themselves to much the more, and making their condition the worse by their own passions and discontents. They that are of a meek and quiet spirit, are under affliction like a dove in a net, mourning indeed, but silent and patient: They that are of a froward, peevish spirit, are like a wild bull in a net, ready to themselves, vexatious to their friends, and provoking to their God: *They are full of the fury of the Lord*, the rebuke of our God. God is angry with them, and contends with them, and they are full of that only, and take no notice of his wife and gracious designs in afflicting them, never enquire wherefore he contends with them, and therefore nothing appears in them but anger at God, and quarrelling with him. They are displeased at God for the dispensations of his providence concerning them, and so they do but make ill worse. This had long been Jerusalem's woeful case, and God took cognizance of it. But,

2. It is promised that Jerusalem's troubles shall at length come to an end, and be transferred to her persecutors, ver. 21. *Nevertheless, hear this, thou afflicted*. It is often the lot of God's church to be afflicted, and God hath always something to say to her then, which she will do well to hearken to. Thou art drunken, not as formerly with wine, not with the intoxicating cup of Babylon's whoredoms and idolatries, but with the cup of affliction. Know then for thy comfort,

1. That the Lord Jehovah is thy Lord and thy God, for all this; it is expressed emphatically, ver. 22. *Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord, and thy God*; the Lord that is able to help thee, and hath wherewithal to relieve thee, thy Lord that hath an incomprehensible right to thee, and will not alienate it, thy God in covenant with thee, and that hath undertaken to make thee happy. Whatever the distresses of God's people may be, he will not disown his relation to them, nor have they lost their interest in him and in his promise.

2. That he is the God that pleads the cause of his people, as their patron and protector, who takes what is done against them as done against himself. The cause of God's people, and of that holy religion which they profess, is a righteous cause, otherwise the righteous God would not appear for it; yet it may, for a time be run down, and seem as if it were lost; but God will plead it, either by convincing the consciences, or confounding the malicious projects of those that fight against it. He will plead it by clearing up the equity and excellency of it to the world, and by giving success to those that act in defence of it. It is his own cause, he hath espoused it, and therefore will plead it with jealousy.

3. That they should shortly take leave of their troubles, and bid a final farewell to them; *I will take out of thy hand the cup of trembling*, that bitter cup, it shall pass from thee. Throwing away the cup of trembling will not do, nor saying we will not, we cannot drink it; but if we patiently submit, he that put it into our hands, will himself take it out of our hands: Nay, it is promised, *Thou shalt no more drink it again*, God hath let fall his controversy with thee, and will not revive the judgment.

4. That their persecutors and oppressors should be made to drink of the same bitter cup which they had drank to deep of, ver. 23. See here, (1.) How intolently they had abused and trampled upon the people of God; *They have said to thy soul, to thee, to thy life, Bow down, that we may go over*: Nay, they have laid it to thy conscience, taking a pride and pleasure in forcing thee to worship idols. Hence the New Testament Babylon treads in the steps of that old oppressor, tyrannizing over men's consciences, giving law to them, and putting them upon the rack, and compelling them to sinful compliances. They that set up an intolible head and judge, requiring an implicit faith in his dictates, and obedience to his commands, do in effect lay to men's souls, *Bow down, that we may go over*, and they say it with delight. How meekly the people of God (having by their sin lost much of their courage and sense of honour) truckled to them; *thou hast laid thy body as the ground*. Observe, The oppressors required the souls to be sacrificed to them, that every man should believe and worship just as they would have them. But all they could gain by their threats and violence, was, that people laid their body on the ground; they brought them to an external and hypocritical conformity, but conscience cannot be forced, nor it is mentioned to their shame that they yielded thus far. But, (3.) Observe how justly God will reckon with those who have carried it so imperiously towards his people; *the cup of trembling shall be put into their hand*. Babylon's case shall be as bad as ever Jerusalem's was. Daniel's persecutors shall be thrown into Daniel's den, let them see how they like it. And the Lord is known by these judgments which he executeth.

C H A P. LII.

The most part of this chapter is of the same subject with the chapter before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, which yet is applicable to the great salvation Christ hath wrought out for us; but the three last verses are of the same subject with the following chapter, concerning the person of the Redeemer, his humiliation and exaltation. Observe, (1.) The encouragement that is given to the Jews in captivity, to hope that God would deliver them in his own way and time,

time, ver. 1—6. (2.) The great joy and rejoicing that shall be both with ringleaders and people upon that occasion, ver. 7—10. (3.) The call given to those that remained in captivity to shift for their own enlargement when liberty was proclaimed, ver. 11, 12. (4.) A short idea given here of the blessing, which is enlarged upon in the next chapter, ver. 13, 14, 15.

1. **A**WAKE, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garment, O Jerusalem: the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee uncircumcised and the unclean. 2. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. 3. For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money. 4. For thus saith the LORD GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. 5. Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD; that my people is taken away for nought? they that run over them, make them howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed. 6. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.

Here, 1. God's people are stirred up to appear vigorous for their own deliverance, ver. 1, 2. They had desired that God would *awake*, and put on his strength, chap. li. 9. Here he calls upon them to *awake*; and put on their strength, to belist themselves; let them awaken from their despondency, and pluck up their spirits, encourage themselves one and another with hope that all will be well yet, and no longer succumb and sink under their burden: Let them awaken from their distrust, look above them, look about them, look into the promises, look into the providences of God that were working for them, and let them raise their expectations of great things from God. Let them awaken from their dulness, and sluggishness, and inactivity, and raise up their endeavours, not to take any irregular courses for their own relief, contrary to the law of nations concerning captives, but to use all likely means to recommend themselves to the favour of the conqueror, and make an interest with him.

God here gives them an assurance, (1.) That they shall be reformed by their captivity. *There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean*, their idolatrous customs shall be no more introduced, or at least not harboured; for when by the marriage of strange wives in Ezra's time and Nehemiah's, the unclean crept in, they were soon by the vigilance and zeal of the magistrates expelled again; and care was taken that Jerusalem should be a holy city. Thus the gospel Jerusalem is purified by the blood of Christ, and the grace of God, and made indeed a holy city. (2.) That they shall be relieved, and rescued out of their captivity; that the bands of their necks should be loosed; that they should not now be any longer oppressed, nay, that they should not be any more invaded as they had been; *there shall no more come against thee* (so it may be read, ver. 1.) *the uncircumcised and the unclean*. The heathen shall not again enter into God's sanctuary, and profane his temple, *Psalm* lxxix. 1. This must be understood with a condition; if they keep close to God, and keep in with him, God will keep off, will keep out the enemy; but if they again corrupt themselves, Antiochus will profane their temple, and the Romans destroy it. However, for some time they shall have peace. And to this happy change now approaching, they are here called to accommodate themselves. (1.) Let them prepare for joy; *put on thy beautiful garments*, no longer to appear in mourning-weeds, and the habit of thy widowhood. Put on a new face, a smiling countenance, now a new and pleasant scene begins to open. The beautiful garments were laid up then, when the harps were hung on the willow-trees, but now there is occasion for both, let both be resumed together. Put on thy strength, and in order to that put on thy beautiful garments, in token of triumph and rejoicing: Note, *The joy of the Lord will be our strength*, *Neh.* viii. 10. and our beautiful garments will serve for armour of proof against the darts of temptation and trouble. And observe, Jerusalem must then put on her beautiful garments, when she is become a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty; and the more holy we are, the more cause we have to rejoice. (2.) Let them prepare for liberty; *shake thyself from the dust* in which thou hast lain, and into which thy proud oppressors have trodden thee, *chap.* li. 23. or into which thou hast in thy extreme sorrow rolled thyself. *Arise, and sit up*, so it may be read. O Jerusalem, prepare to get clear of all the marks of servitude thou hast been under, and to shift thy quarters, *loose thyself from the bands of thy neck*, be inspired with generous principles and resolutions to assert thine own liberty. The gospel proclaims liberty to those who were bound with fears, and makes it their duty to take hold of their liberty. Let those that have been weary, and heavy laden under the burden of sin, finding relief in Christ, shake themselves from the dust of their doubts and fears, and loose themselves from those bands; for if the Son make them free they shall be free indeed.

2. God stirs up himself to appear jealous for the deliverance of his people. He doth here plead their cause with himself, and even stir up himself to come and save them; for his reasons of mercy are fetched from himself. Divers things he here considers,

1. That the Chaldeans who oppressed them, never acknowledged God in the power they gained over his people; no more than Sennacherib did, who, when God made use of him as an instrument for the correction and reformation of his people, meant not so, *Isa.* x. 6. ver. 3. *Ye have said yourselves for nought, you got nothing by it, nor did I: God considers that when they by sin had sold themselves, he himself who had the prior, nay, the sole title to them, did not increase his wealth by the price*, *Psalm* lxxv. 12. They did not so much as pay their debts to him with it; the Babylonians gave him no thanks for them; but rather reproached and blasphemed his name upon that account. And therefore they having so long had you for nothing, shall at last restore you for nothing; *you shall be redeemed without price*, as was promised, *chap.* xlv. 13. Those that give nothing, must expect to get nothing; however, God is a debtor to no man.

2. That they had been often before in the like distress, had often smothered for a time under the tyranny of their task-masters, and therefore it was a pity they should now be left always in the hand of these oppressors, ver. 4. *My people went down into Egypt*, in an amicable way to settle there; but they enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour. And then they were delivered, notwithstanding the pride, and power, and policies of Pharaoh. And why may we not think God will deliver his people now? At other

times, the Assyrian oppressed the people of God without cause, as when the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria; soon after Sennacherib, another Assyrian, with a destroying army, oppressed and made himself master of all the defended cities of Judah; the Babylonians might not unfully be called Assyrians, their monarch, being a branch of the Assyrian; and they now oppressed them without cause. Though God was righteous in delivering them into their hands, they were unrighteous in using them as they did; and could not pretend a dominion over them as their subjects, as Pharaoh might when they were settled in Goshen, a part of his kingdom. When we suffer by the hands of wicked and unreasonable men, it is some comfort to be able to say, that as to them it is without cause, that we have not given them any provocation, *Psalm* vii. 3, 4, 5, &c.

3. That God's glory suffered by the injuries that were done to his people, ver. 5. *What have I here, what do I get by it that my people is taken away for nought?* God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem, his altar there is gone, and his temple in ruins: but it in lieu of that he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives, or by the natives, it were another matter, God might be looked upon as in some respect a gainer in his honour by it; but alas, it is not so. (1.) The captives are so dispirited that they cannot praise him; but instead of that they are continually howling, which grieves him and moves his pity. *They that rule over them make them to howl*, as the Egyptians of old made them to sigh, *Exod.* ii. 23. so the Babylonians now using them more hardly, extorted from them louder complaints, and made them to howl. This gives us no pleasing idea of the temper the captives were now in; their complaints were not so rational and pious as they should have been, but brutish rather, they howled, *Isaiah* vii. 14. However, God heard it, and came down to deliver them, as he did out of Egypt, *Exod.* iii. 7. (2.) The natives are so insolent that they will not praise him, but instead of that they are continually blaspheming, which affronts him, and moves his anger. They boasted that they were too hard for God, because they were too hard for his people, and set him at defiance, as unable to deliver them and thus my name continually every day is blasphemed among them. When they praised their own idols, they *lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven*, *Dan.* v. 23. Now, saith God, this is not to be suffered, I will go down to deliver them, for what honour, what rent, what tribute of praise have I from the world, when my people that should be to me for a name and a praise, are to me for a reproach; for their oppressors will neither praise God themselves, nor let them do it. The apostle quotes this with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, *Rom.* ii. 23, 24.

4. That his glory would be greatly manifested by their deliverance, ver. 6. *Therefore, because my name is thus blasphemed, I will arise, and my people shall know my name, Jehovah*, by which he had made himself known in delivering them out of Egypt, *Exod.* vi. 3. God will do something to vindicate his own honour, something for his great name, and his people that have almost lost the knowledge of it shall know it to their comfort, and shall find it their strong tower. They shall know that God's providence governs the world, and all the affairs of it, that it is he that doth speak deliverance for them by the word of his power, that it is he only, who at first spake, and it was done. They shall know that God's word, which Israel is blessed with above other nations, shall without fail have its accomplishment in due season; that it is he that speaks by the prophets, it is he, and they do not speak of themselves, for not one iota or tittle of what they say shall fall to the ground.

7. ¶ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! 8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion. 9. ¶ Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. 10. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. 11. ¶ Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing: go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD. 12. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward.

The removal of the Jews from Babylon to their own land again, is here spoken of both as a mercy, and as a duty; and the application of those words, ver. 7. to the preaching of the gospel by the apostle, *Rom.* x. 15. plainly intimates that that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, to which what is here said of their redemption out of Babylon ought to be accommodated.

1. It is here spoken of as a great blessing which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness.

1. Those that bring the tidings of their release shall be very acceptable, ver. 7. *How beautiful upon the mountains, the mountains round about Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance, how beautiful are thy feet*, when it is known what tidings they bring. It is not meant so much of the common posts, or the messengers sent expressly by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves, who being at the fountain head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and presently went themselves, or sent their own messengers to all parts to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there that their brethren would be with them shortly, for it is published not merely as matter of news, but as a proof that Zion's God reigns, for in that language it is published, they say unto Zion, *Thy God reigns*. Those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation, that Cyrus has given orders for the release of the Jews, those tidings which were so long expected by them that waited for the consolation of Israel, those good tidings (so the original reads it without the tautology of our translation, *good tidings of good*) they put this construction upon it, *O Zion, thy God reigns*. Note, When bad news is abroad, this is good news, and when good news is abroad, this is the best news, that Zion's God reigns; that God is Zion's God, in covenant with her, and as such he reigns, *Psalm* cxlvi. 10. *Zech.* ix. 9. *The Lord hath founded Zion*, *Isa.* xiv. 32. All events have their rise in the disposals of his providence, and their tendency to the advancement of the kingdom of his grace. This must be applied

applied to the preaching of the gospel; which is a proclamation of peace and salvation, it is gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings, tidings of victory over our spiritual enemies, and liberty from our spiritual bondage. The good news is, that the Lord Jesus reigns, and all power is given to him. Christ himself brought these tidings first, *Luke iv. 18. Heb. ii. 3.* And of him the text speaks; *How beautiful are his feet*, his feet that were nailed to the cross, how beautiful upon mount Calvary: His feet when he came *leaping on the mountains*, *Cant. ii. 8.* How beautiful were they to those who knew his voice, and knew it to be the voice of their beloved. His ministers proclaim these good tidings; they ought to keep their feet clean from the pollutions of the world, and then they ought to be beautiful in the eyes of those to whom they are sent, who sit at their feet, or rather at Christ's in them, to hear his word. They must be *esteemed in love*, for *their work's sake*, *1 Thess. v. 12.* For their message's sake, which is well worthy of all acceptance.

2. Those to whom the tidings are brought shall be put thereby into a transport of joy.

1. Zion's watchmen shall then rejoice, because they are surprisingly illuminated, *ver. 8.* The watchmen on Jerusalem's walls shall lead the chorus in this triumph; who they were we are told, *chap. lxiii. 6.* They were such as God set on the walls of Jerusalem, to make mention of his name, and to continue instant in prayer to him, till he again *made Jerusalem a praise on the earth*, these watchmen stand upon their watch-tower, waiting for answer to these prayers, *Heb. ii. 1.* And therefore when the good news comes they have it first, and the longer they have continued, and the more importunate they have been in praying for it, the more will they be elevated when it comes. They shall *lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing in concert*, to invite others to join with them in their praises. And that which above all things will transport them with pleasure, is that *they shall see eye to eye*, i. e. face to face; whereas God had been a God hiding himself, and they could scarce discern any thing of his favour through the dark cloud of their afflictions, now the cloud is scattered they shall plainly see it. They shall see *Zion's King eye to eye*, so it was fulfilled when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and there were those that *saw his glory*, *John i. 14. and looked upon it*, *1 John i. 1.* They shall see an exact agreement and correspondence between the prophecy and the event, the promise and the performance, they shall see how they look one upon another eye to eye; and be satisfied that the same God spoke the one, and did the other. When the Lord shall bring again Zion out of her captivity, the prophets shall from thence receive and give fuller discoveries than ever of God's good-will to his people. And applying this also as the foregoing verse to gospel-times, it is a promise of the pouring out of the Spirit upon gospel-ministers, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, to lead them into all truth, so that they shall see eye to eye; shall see God's grace more clearly than the Old Testament saints could see it. And they shall herein be unanimous; in these great things concerning the common salvation, they shall concur in their sentiments as well as their songs. Nay, St. Paul seems to allude to this, when he makes it the privilege of our future state, that *we shall see face to face*.

2. Zion's waste places shall then rejoice, because they shall be surprisingly comforted, *ver. 9.* *Break forth unto joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem*, i. e. all parts of Jerusalem, for it was all in ruins, and even those parts that seemed to lie most desolate shall share in the joy; and they having little expected it shall break forth into joy, as men that dream, *Psal. cxxvi. 1, 2.* Let them sing together. Note, Those that share in mercies ought to join in praises. Here is matter for joy and praise. (1.) God's people will have the comfort of this salvation; and what is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. He hath redeemed Jerusalem, i. e. the inhabitants of Jerusalem that were sold into the hands of their enemies, and thereby he hath comforted his people that were in sorrow. The redemption of Jerusalem is the joy of all God's people, whose character is that they look for that redemption, *Luke ii. 38.* (2.) God will have the glory of it, *ver. 10.* He *hath made bare his holy arm*, i. e. manifested and displayed his power in the eyes of all the nations. God's arm is a holy arm, stretched out in purity and justice, in defence of holiness, and in pursuance of his promise. (3.) All the world will have the benefit of it. In the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus, the arm of the Lord was revealed, and all the ends of the earth were made to see the great salvation, i. e. not as spectators of it only, as they saw the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, but as sharers in it; some of all nations, the most remote shall partake of the benefits of the redemption. This is applied to our salvation by Christ, *Luke iii. 6.* *All flesh shall see the salvation of God*, that great salvation.

2. It is here spoken of as a great business, which ought to be managed with abundance of care and circumspection. When the liberty is proclaimed,

1. Let the people of God hasten out of Babylon with all convenient speed; though they are never so well settled there, let them not think of taking root in Babylon, but *Depart ye, depart ye*, (*ver. 11.*) *go ye out from the midst of her*, not only those that are in the borders, but those that are in the midst, in the heart of the country, let them be gone. Babylon is no place for Israelites: As soon as they have leave to go, let them lose no time; with this word God stirred up the spirit of those that were moved to go up, *Ezra i. 5.* And it is a call to all those who are yet in the bondage of sin and Satan, to make use of the liberty which Christ hath proclaimed to them. And if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed.

2. Let them take heed of carrying away with them any of the pollutions of Babylon; *touch no unclean thing*. Now God makes bare his holy arm for you, *Be ye holy as he is, and keep yourselves from every wicked thing*. When they came out of Egypt they brought with them the idolatrous customs of Egypt, *Ezek. xxiii. 3.* Which were their ruin; let them take heed of doing so now they come out of Babylon. Note, When we are receiving any special mercy from God, we ought more carefully than ever to watch against all impurity. But especially let them be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord, i. e. the priests that had the charge of the vessels of the sanctuary, when they were restored by a particular grant, to carry them to Jerusalem, *Ezra i. 7.—viii. 24.* Let them not only avoid touching any unclean thing; but be very careful to *cleanse themselves according to the purification of the sanctuary*. Christians are made to our God spiritual priests, *Rev. i. 5.* They are to bear the vessels of the Lord, are intrusted to keep the ordinances of God pure and entire, it is a good thing committed to them; and they ought to be clean, to wash their hands in innocency, and so to compass God's altars, and carry his vessels, and keep themselves pure.

3. Let them depend upon the presence of God with them, and his protection in their remove, *ver. 12.* *Ye shall not go out with haste*. They were to go with a diligent haste, not to lose time, nor linger as Lot in Sodom, but they were not to go with a diffident, distrustful haste; as if they were afraid of being pursued, as when they came out of Egypt, or of having the orders for their release recalled and countermanded: no, they shall find that as for God his work is perfect, and therefore they need not make more haste than good speed. Cyrus shall give them an honourable discharge,

and they shall have an honourable return, and not steal away, *for the Lord will go before them* as their general and commander in chief: *And the God of Israel will be their reward*, or, he that will gather up them that are left behind. God will both lead their van, and bring up their rear; i. e. He will secure them from enemies that either meet them or follow them, for with his favour will he compass them. The pillar of cloud and fire when they came out of Egypt, sometimes went behind them to secure their rear, *Exod. xiv. 19.* And God's presence with them would now be that to them which that pillar was a visible token of. Those that are in the way of their duty are under God's special protection; and he that believeth this will not make haste.

13. Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled; and be very high. 14. As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man; and his form more than the sons of men;) 15. So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

Here, as in other places, for the confirming of the faith of God's people, and the encouraging of their hope in the promises of temporal deliverances, the prophet passeth from them to speak of the great salvation which should in the fulness of time be wrought out by the Messiah. As the prophecy of Christ's incarnation was intended for the ratification of the promise of their deliverance from the Assyrian army, so this of Christ's death and resurrection, is to confirm the promise of their return out of Babylon; for both these salvations were typical of the great redemption, and the prophecies of them had a reference to that. This prophecy which begins here, and is continued to the end of the next chapter, points, as plainly as can be, at Jesus Christ; the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it; and some of our's (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who from hence preached Christ to the eunuch, hath put it past dispute, that *of him speaketh the prophet this, of him, and of no other man*, *Acts viii. 34, 35.*

Here, (1.) God owns Christ to be both commissioned and qualified for his undertaking. (1.) He is appointed to it. He is my servant, whom I employ, and therefore will uphold; in his undertaking he doth his Father's will, seeks his Father's honour, and serves the interest of his Father's kingdom. (2.) He is qualified for it! he shall deal prudently, for the *spirit of wisdom and understanding shall rest upon him*, *Isa. xi. 2.* The word is used concerning David when he *believed himself wisely*, *1 Sam. xviii. 14.* Christ is wisdom itself, and in the contriving and carrying on of the work of our redemption, there appeared much of the wisdom of God in a mystery, *1 Cor. ii. 7.* Christ when he was here upon earth dealt very prudently, to the admiration of all.

(2.) He gives a short prospect both of his humiliation, and his exaltation. See here,

1. How he humbled himself. *Many were astonished at him*, as they were at David, when by reason of his sorrows and troubles he became a wonder unto many, *Psal. lxxi. 7.* Many admired to see what base usage he met with, how inveterate people were against him, how inhuman, and what indignities were done him. *His visage was marred more than any man's*, when he was buffeted, smitten on the cheek, and crowned with thorns, and hid not his face from shame and spitting. *His face was foul with weeping*, for he was a man of sorrows; he that was really sorer than the children of men, had a good face spoiled with the abuses that were done him: Never was man used so barbarously; his form when he took upon him the form of a servant, was more mean and abject than that of any of the sons of men. They that saw him said, sure never man looked so miserably, a worm, and no man, *Psal. xxii. 6.* The nation abhorred him, *chap. xlix. 7.* treated him as the off-scouring of all things. *Never was sorrow like unto his sorrow.*

2. How highly God exalted him, and therefore extolled him, because he humbled himself. Three words are used for this, *ver. 13.* *He shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high*, God shall exalt him, men shall extol him, and with both he shall be very high, higher than the highest, higher than the heavens. He shall prosper in his work, and succeed in it, and that shall raise him very high. (1.) Many nations shall be the better for him, for he shall sprinkle them, and not the Jews only; the blood of sprinkling shall be applied to their consciences to purify them. He suffered, and died, and so sprinkled many nations, for in his death there was a fountain opened, *Zech. xiii. 1.* He shall sprinkle many nations by his heavenly doctrine, which shall drop as the rain, and distil as the dew. Moses did so only on one nation, *Deut. xxxii. 2.* But Christ's on many nations. He shall do it by baptism, which is the washing of the body with pure water, *Heb. x. 22.* So that this promise had its accomplishment when Christ sent his apostles to disciple all nations, by baptizing or sprinkling them. (2.) The great ones of the nations shall shew him respect; *Kings shall shut their mouths at him*, i. e. they shall not open their mouths against him as they have done to contradict and blaspheme his sacred oracles; nay, they shall acquiesce in, and be well pleased with the methods he takes of setting up his kingdom in the world; they shall with great humility and reverence receive his oracles and laws, as those who when they heard Job's wisdom, after his speech, *spoke not again*, *Job xxix. 9—22.* *Kings shall see and arise*, *chap. xlix. 7.* (3.) The mystery, which was kept secret from the beginning of the world, shall by him be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, as the apostle speaks, *Rom. xvi. 25, 26.* *That which has not been told them, shall they see*; the gospel brings to light things now and unheard of, which will awaken the attention, and engage the reverence of kings and kingdoms. This is applied to the preaching of the gospel in the Gentile world, *Rom. xv. 21.* where these words are quoted according to the Septuagint translation; *to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard, shall understand.* As the things revealed had long been kept secret, to the persons to whom they were revealed had long been kept in the dark; but now they shall see and consider the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, which before they had not been told of, they had not heard. That shall be discovered to them by the gospel of Christ, which could never be told them by all the learning of their philosophers, or the art of their diviners, or any of their Pagan oracles. Much had been said in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah; much had been told them, and they had heard it: but, as the queen of Sheba said concerning Solomon, what they shall see in him when he comes, shall far exceed what had been told them. Christ disappointed the expectations of those who looked for a Messiah according to their fancies, as the carnal Jews, but outdid theirs who looked for such a Messiah as was promised. According to their faith, nay, and beyond it, it was to them.

C H A P. LIII.

The two great things which the Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament prophecies testified before-hand, were the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. i. 11. And that which Christ himself, when he expounded Moses and all the prophets, shewed to be the drift and scope of them all, was, that Christ ought to suffer, and then to enter into his glory, Luke xxiv. 26, 27. But nowhere in all the Old Testament are those two so plainly and fully prophesied of, as here in this chapter, out of which divers passages are quoted, with application to Christ, in the New Testament. This chapter is so replenished with the unfathomable riches of Christ, that it may be called rather the gospel of the evangelist Isaiah, than the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah. We may observe here, (1.) The reproach of Christ's sufferings; the meanness of his appearance, the greatness of his grief; and the prejudices which many conceived from thence against his doctrine, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) The rolling away of this reproach, and the stamping of an immortal honour by four considerations: (1.) That therein he did his Father's will, ver. 4—6—10. (2.) That thereby he made atonement for the sin of man, ver. 4, 5, 6—8—11, 12. for it is not for any sin of his own that he suffered, ver. 9. (3.) That he bore his sufferings with an intincible and exemplary patience, ver. 7. (4.) That he suffered prosper in his undertaking, and his sufferings should end in his immortal honour, ver. 10, 11, 12. By mixing faith with the prophecy of this chapter, we may improve our acquaintance with Jesus Christ, and him crucified; with Jesus Christ, and him glorified: dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification.

1. **W**HO hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The prophet in the close of the former chapter had foreseen and foretold the kind reception which the gospel of Christ should find among the Gentiles, that nations and their kings should bid it welcome, that they who had not seen him, yet should believe in him, and though they had not any prophecies among them of gospel grace, which might raise their expectations, and dispose them to entertain it, yet upon the first notice of it they should give it its due weight and consideration. Now here he foretells with wonder the unbelief of the Jews, notwithstanding the previous notices they had of the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament, and the opportunity they had of being personally acquainted with them. Observe here,

1. The contempt they put upon the gospel of Christ, ver. 1. The unbelief of the Jews in our Saviour's time, is expressly said to be the fulfilling of this word, John xii. 38. And it is applied likewise to the little success which the apostles' preaching met with among Jews and Gentiles, Rom. x. 16. Note, 1. Of the many that hear the report of the gospel, there are few, very few, that believe it. It is reported openly and publicly, not whispered in a corner, or confined to the schools, but proclaimed to all; and it is so faithful a saying, and so well worthy of all acceptance, that one would think it should be universally received and believed, but it is quite otherwise: few believed the prophets who spake before of Christ, when he came himself, none of the rulers or of the Pharisees followed him, and but here and there one of the common people. When the apostles carried this report all the world over, some in each place believed, but comparatively very few. It is so still, of the many that profess to believe this report, there are few that cordially embrace it, and submit to the power of it. 2. Therefore people believe not the report of the gospel, because the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them; they do not discern, nor will be brought to acknowledge that divine power which goes along with the word; the arm of the Lord is made bare (as was said, chap. lii. 10.) in the miracles that were wrought to confirm Christ's doctrine in the wonderful success of it, and its energy upon the conscience; though it is a still voice, it is a strong one, but they do not perceive this; nor do they experience in themselves that working of the Spirit which makes the word effectual. They believe not the gospel, because by rebelling against the light they had, they had forfeited the grace of God, which therefore he justly denied them, and withheld from them, and for want of that they believed not. 3. This is a thing we ought to be much affected with; it is to be wondered at, and greatly lamented, and ministers may go to God, and complain of it to him, as the prophet here. What pity is it that such rich grace should be received in vain, that precious souls should perish at the pool's side, because they will not step in and be healed.

2. The contempt they put upon the person of Christ, because of the meanness of his appearance, ver. 2, 3. And this seems to come in as a reason why they rejected his doctrine, because they were prejudiced against his person. When he was on earth, many that heard him preach, and could not but approve of what they heard, yet would not give it any regard or entertainment, because it came from one that made so small a figure, and had no external advantages to recommend him. Observe here,

1. The low condition he submitted to, and how he abused and emptied himself; the entry he made into the world, and the character he wore in it, were no way agreeable to the ideas which the Jews had formed of the Messiah, and their expectations concerning him, but quite the reverse.

(1.) It was expected that his extraction should be very great and noble; he was to be the son of David, of a family that had a name like to the names of the great men that are in the earth, 2 Sam. vii. 9. But he sprang out of this royal and illustrious family, when it was reduced and sunk, and Joseph that son of David, that was his supposed father, was but a poor carpenter, perhaps a ship carpenter, for most of his relations were fishermen; this is here meant by his being a root out of a dry ground, his being born of a mean and despicable family, in the north; in Galilee, of a family, out of which like a dry and desert ground, nothing green, nothing great was expected; in a country of such small repute, that it was thought no good thing could come out of it. His mother being a virgin, was as dry ground, yet from her he sprang who is not only fruit but root; the seed on the stony ground had no root. But through Christ grew out of a dry ground, he is both the root and the off-spring of David; the root of the good olive.

(2.) It was expected that he should make a public entry, and come in pomp and with observation; but instead of that, he grew up before God, not before men. God had his eye upon him, but men regarded him not;

he grew up as a tender plant, silently and insensibly, and without any noise, as the corn, that tender plant, grows up, we know not how, Mark iv. 27. Christ rose as a tender plant, which one would have thought might easily have been crushed, and that one frosty night would have nipped it. The gospel of Christ in its beginning was as a grain of mustard-seed, so inconsiderable did it seem, Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

(3.) It was expected that he should have some uncommon beauty in his face and person, which should charm the eye, attract the heart, and raise the expectations of all that saw him; but there was nothing of that in him; not that he was in the least deformed, or mis-shapen, but he had no form nor comeliness, nothing extraordinary, which one might have thought to meet with in the countenance of an Incarnate Deity; those who saw him could not see that there was any beauty in him that they should desire him, nothing in him, more than in another beloved, Cant. v. 9. Moses, when he was born, was exceeding fair, to that degree that it was looked upon as a happy presage, Acts vii. 20. Heb. xi. 23. David, when he was anointed, was of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to, 1 Sam. xvi. 12. But our Lord Jesus had nothing of that to recommend him. Or, it may refer not so much to his person, as to the manner of his appearing in the world, which had nothing in it of sensible glory. His gospel is preached, not with the enticing words of a man's wisdom, but with all plainness agreeable to the subject.

(4.) It was expected that he should live a pleasant life, and have a full enjoyment of all the delights of the sons and daughters of men, which would have invited all sorts to him; but quite contrary, he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; it was not only his last scene that was tragical, but his whole life was so; not only mean, but miserable:

But one continued chain
Of labour, sorrow, and consuming pain.

Sir R. B.

Thus being made sin for us, he underwent the sentence sin had subjected us to, that we should eat in sorrow all the days of our life, Gen. iii. 17. and thereby relaxed much of the rigour and extremity of the sentence as to us. His condition was upon many accounts sorrowful; he was unsettled, and had not where to lay his head; lived upon alms, was opposed and menaced, and endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; his spirit was tender, and he admitted the impressions of sorrow; we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. Lentulus in his epistle to the Roman senate concerning Jesus, saith, he was never seen to laugh; and so worn and macerated was he with continual grief, that when he was but a little above thirty years of age, he was taken to be near fifty, John viii. 57. Grief was his intimate acquaintance; for he acquainted himself with others' grievances, and sympathized with them, and he never set his own at a distance; for in his transfiguration he talked of his own decease; and in his triumph wept over Jerusalem. Let us look unto him, and mourn.

2. The low opinion that men had of him upon this account, they being generally apt to judge of persons and things by the sight of the eye, and according to outward appearance; they saw no beauty in him that they should desire him. There was a great deal of true beauty in him, the beauty of holiness, and the beauty of goodness, enough to render him the desire of all nations, but the far greater part of those among whom he lived, and conversed, saw none of this beauty, for it was spiritually discerned. Carnal hearts see no excellency in the Lord Jesus, nothing that should induce them to desire an acquaintance with him or interest in him. Nay, he is not only not desired, but he is despised and rejected, abandoned and abhorred, a reproach of men, an abject one, that men were shy of keeping company with, and had not any esteem for; a worm and no man. He was despised as a mean man, rejected as an ill man; he was the stone which the builders refused, they would not have him to reign over them; men that should have had so much reason as to understand things better, so much tenderness as not to trample upon a man in misery; men whom he came to seek and save, they rejected him: *He hid as it were our faces from him*, looked another way, and his sufferings were as nothing to us: though never sorrow was like unto his sorrow. Nay, we not only carried it as unconcerned about him, but as loathing him, and having him in detestation. It may be read, *He hid as it were his face from us*, concealed the glory of his majesty, and drew a veil over it, and there he was despised and we esteemed him not, because we could not see through that veil. Christ having undertaken to make satisfaction to the justice of God for the injury man had done him in his honour by sin (and God cannot otherwise be injured but in his honour) he did it not only by divesting himself of the glories due to an Incarnate Deity, but by submitting himself to the disgraces due to the worst of men and malefactors; and thus by villifying himself, he glorified his Father: but this is a good reason why we should esteem him highly, and study to do him honour; let him be received by us, whom men rejected.

4. ¶ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgressions of my people was he stricken. 9. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he hath done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

In these verses we have,

1. A farther account of the sufferings of Christ: much was said before, but more is said here, of the very low condition to which he abased and humbled himself, to which he became obedient, even to the death of the cross.

(1.) He had griefs and sorrows; being acquainted with them he kept up the acquaintance, and did not grow shy, no, not of such melancholy acquaintance: were griefs and sorrows allotted him? he bore them and blamed not his lot, he carried them, and did neither shrink from them, nor sink under them. The load was heavy, and the way long, and yet he did not tire, but persevered to the end, till he said, It is finished.

(2.) He had blows and bruises; he was stricken, and smitten, and afflicted. His sorrows bruised him, he felt pain and smart from them, they touched him in the most tender part, especially when God was dishonoured, and when he forsook him upon the cross. All along he was smitten with the tongue, when he was cavilled at and contradicted, put under the worst of characters, and had all manner of evil said against him: at last he was smitten with the hand, with blow after blow.

(3.) He had wounds and stripes: he was scourged, not under the merciful restriction of the Jewish law, which allowed not above forty stripes to be given to the worst of malefactors, but according to the usage of the Romans. And his scourging doubtless was the more severe, because Pilate intended it as an equivalent for his crucifixion, and yet it proved a preface to it. He was wounded in his hands and feet and side; though it was so ordered that not a bone of him should be broken, yet he had scarce any where a whole skin (how fond soever we are to sleep in one, even when we are called out to suffer for him) but from the crown of his head, which was crowned with thorns, to the soles of his feet, which were nailed to the cross, nothing appeared but wounds and bruises.

(4.) He was wronged and abused, *ver. 7.* he was oppressed, injuriously treated, and hardly dealt with: that was laid to his charge which he was perfectly innocent of, that laid upon him what he did not deserve, and in both he was oppressed and injured; he was afflicted both in mind and body; being oppressed he laid it to heart, and though he was patient, was not stupid under it, but he mingled his tears with those of the oppressed, that have no comforter, because *on the side of the oppressors there is power*, *Eccles. iv. 1.* Oppression is a sore affliction, it has made many a wise man mad, *Eccles. vii. 7.* but our Lord Jesus, though when he was oppressed he was afflicted, yet kept possession of his own soul.

(5.) He was judged and imprisoned; that is implied in his being *taken from prison and judgment*, *ver. 8.* God having made him sin for us, he was proceeded against as a malefactor, he was apprehended and taken into custody, and made a prisoner, he was judged, accused, tried, and condemned, according to the usual forms of law: God filed a process against him, judged him in pursuance of that process, and clapped him up in the prison of the grave, at the door of which a stone was rolled and sealed.

(6.) He was cut off by an untimely death from the land of the living, though he lived a most useful life, did so many good works, and they were all such, than one would be apt to think it was for some of them that they stoned him. He was stricken to the death, to the grave which he made with the wicked, for he was crucified between two thieves, as if he had been the worst of the three; and yet with the rich, for he was buried in a sepulchre that belonged to Joseph, an honourable counsellor. Though he died with the wicked, and according to the common course of dealing with criminals, should have been buried with them, in the place where he was crucified, yet God here foretold, and providence so ordered it, that he should make his grave with the innocent, with the rich, as a mark of distinction put between him and those that really deserved to die, even in his sufferings.

2. A full account of the meaning of his sufferings: It was a very great mystery, that so excellent a person should suffer such hard things: and it is natural to ask with amazement, how it came about; what evil has he done? His enemies indeed looked upon him as suffering justly for his crimes; and though they could lay nothing to his charge, they *esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*, *ver. 4.* Because they hated him and ran him down, they thought God did; that he was his enemy and fought against him, and therefore they were the more enraged against him, saying, *God hath forsaken him, persecute and take him*, *Psal. lxxi. 11.* Those that are justly smitten are smitten of God, for by him princes decree justice, and so they looked upon him to be smitten, justly put to death as a blasphemer, a deceiver, and an enemy to Cæsar. They that saw him hanging on the cross, inquired not into the merits of his cause; but took it for granted that he was guilty of every thing laid to his charge, and that therefore vengeance suffered him not to live. Thus John's friends *esteemed him smitten of God*, because there was something uncommon in his sufferings. It was true that he was *smitten of God*, *ver. 10.* (or, as some read it, *he was God's smitten and afflicted*), the Son of God though smitten and afflicted) but not in the sense that they meant it: for it is true he suffered all these things; but,

1. He never did any thing in the least to deserve this hard usage: whereas he was charged with perverting the nation and sowing sedition, it was utterly false, he had done no violence, but went about doing good. And whereas he was called that *deceiver*, he never deserved that character, for *there was no deceit in his mouth*, *ver. 9.* to which the apostle refers, *1 Pet. ii. 22.* *He did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*; he never offended either in word or deed, nor could any of his enemies take up that challenge of his, which of you convinceth me of sin? The judge that condemned him owned he found no fault in him; and the centurion that executed him professed that certainly he was a righteous man.

2. He carried himself under his sufferings so as to make it appear that he did not suffer as an evil-doer; for though he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he *opened not his mouth*, *ver. 7.* no, not so much as to plead his own innocence, but freely offered himself to suffer and die for us, and objected nothing against it. This quite takes away the scandal of the cross, that he voluntarily submitted to it for great and holy ends. By his wisdom he could have evaded the sentence, and by his power have resisted the execution; but *thus it was written, and thus it behoved him to suffer*; *This commandment he received from his Father, and therefore he was led as a lamb to the slaughter*, without any difficulty or reluctance; he is the *Lamb of God*, and as a sheep is dumb before the shearers, nay, before the butchers, so he *opened not his mouth*; which notes not only his exemplary patience under affliction, *Psal. xxxix. 9.* and his meekness under reproach, *Psal. xxxviii. 13.* but his cheerful compliance with his father's will; *Not my will, but thine be done: Lo, I come.* And by this will we are sanctified; his making his own soul, his own life, an offering for our sin.

3. It was for our good and in our stead that Jesus Christ suffered; this is asserted here plainly and fully, and in a very great variety of emphatical expressions:

1. It is certain we are all guilty before God; we have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God, *ver. 6.* *All we like sheep have gone astray*, one as well as another; the whole race of mankind lies under the stain of original corruption, and every particular person stands charged with many actual transgressions: we have all gone astray from God our rightful owner, alienated ourselves from him, from the ends he designed us to move towards, and the way he appointed us to move in. We have gone astray like sheep that are apt to wander, and are unapt when they have gone astray to find the way home again. And that is our true character; we are bent to backslide from God, but altogether unable ourselves to return to him. This is mentioned not only as our infelicity, that we go astray from the green pastures, and expose ourselves to the beasts of prey, but as our iniquity; we affront God in going astray from him, for we turn aside every one to his own way, and thereby set up ourselves and our own will in competition with God and his will; which is the malignity of sin: instead of walking obediently in God's ways, we have turned wilfully and stubbornly to our own way, the

way of our own heart, the way that our own corrupt appetites and passions lead us to; we have set up ourselves, to be our own masters, our own carvers, to do what we will, and have what we will; some think it intimates our own evil way, in distinction from the evil way of others. Sinners have their own iniquity, their beloved sin, which doth most easily beset them; their own evil way, that they are particularly fond of and bless themselves in.

2. Our sins are our sorrows and our griefs, *ver. 4.* Or, as it may be read, our sicknesses and our wounds: The LXX. read it, our sins, and so the apostle, *1 Pet. ii. 24.* Our original corruptions are the sicknesses and disease of the soul, an habitual indisposition; our actual transgressions are the wounds of the soul, which put conscience to pain; if it be not feared and senseless. Or, our sins are called our griefs and sorrows, because all our griefs and sorrows are owing to our sins: and our sins deserve all griefs and sorrows, even those that are most extreme and everlasting.

3. Our Lord Jesus was appointed, and did undertake to make satisfaction for our sins, and to save us from the penal consequences of them. (1.) He was appointed to do it, by the will of his father, for *the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* God chose him to be the Saviour of poor sinners, and would have him to save them in this way, by bearing their sins, and the punishment of them; not the *idem*, the same that we should have suffered, but the *tundendum*, that which was more than equivalent for the maintaining of the honour of the holiness and justice of God in the government of the world. Observe here,

(1.) In what way we are saved from the ruin, to which by sin we were become liable; by laying our sins on Christ, as the sins of the offerer were laid upon the sacrifice, and those of all Israel upon the head of the scape-goat. Our sins were made to meet upon him, so the margin reads it; the sins of all that he was to save, from every place and every age, met upon him, and he was met with for them. They were made to fall upon him, so some read it, as those rushed upon him that came with swords and staves to take him. The laying of our sins upon Christ, implies the taking of them off from us; we shall not fall under the curse of the law, if we submit to the grace of the gospel; they were laid upon Christ when he was made sin, *i. e.* a sin-offering for us; and redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us, and so he put himself into a capacity to make those easy that come to him heavy-laden under the burden of sin. See *Psal. xl. 6-12.*

(2.) By whom this was appointed; it was the Lord that laid our iniquities on Christ: he contrived this way of reconciliation and salvation, and he accepted of the vicarious satisfaction Christ was to make. Christ was delivered to death by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God. None but God had power to lay our sins upon Christ, both because the sin was committed against him, and to him the satisfaction was to be made, and because Christ, on whom the iniquity was to be laid, was his own son, the son of his love, and his holy child Jesus, who himself knew no sin.

(3.) For whom this atonement was to be made; it was the iniquity of us all that was laid on Christ; for in Christ there is a sufficiency of merit for the salvation of all, and a serious offer made of that salvation to all, which excludes none that do not exclude themselves. It intimates, that this is the one only way of salvation: all that are justified, are justified by having their sins laid on Jesus Christ, and though they were never so many he is able to bear the weight of them all. (2.) He undertook to do it; God laid upon him our iniquity; but did he consent to it? yes he did; for so some think is the true reading of the next words, *ver. 7.* *It was exacted, and he answered:* divine justice demanded satisfaction for our sins, and he engaged to make the satisfaction. He became our surety, not as originally bound with us, but as bail to the action: Upon me be the curse, my Father. And therefore when he was seized he indented with those into whose hands he surrendered himself, that that should be his disciples charge: *If ye seek me, let these go their way*, *John xviii. 8.* By his own voluntary subjection he made himself responsible for our debt, and it is well for us he was responsible; *thus he restored that which he took not away.*

4. Having undertaken our debt, he underwent the penalty. Solomon saith, *he that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it*; Christ being surety for us did smart for it. (1.) He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows, *ver. 4.* He not only submitted to the common infirmities of human nature, and the common calamities of human life, which sin had introduced, but he underwent the extremities of grief, when he said, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful.* He made the sorrows of this present time heavy to himself, that he might make them light and easy for us. Sin is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery, Christ bore our sins, and so bore our griefs, bore them off us, that we should never be oppressed above measure. This is quoted, *Mat. viii. 17.* with application to the compassion Christ had for the sick that came to him to be cured, and the power he put forth to cure them. (2.) He did this by suffering for our sins, *ver. 5.* *He was wounded for our transgressions*; *i. e.* to make atonement for them, and to purchase for us the pardon of them. Our sins were the thorns in his head, the nails in his hands and feet, the spear in his side. Wounds and bruises were the consequences of sin, what we deserved, and what we had brought upon ourselves, *Jhu. i. 6.* That these wounds and bruises though they are painful may not be mortal, Christ was wounded for our transgressions, was tormented or pained (the word is used for the pains of a woman in travail) for our revolts and rebellions; he was bruised or crushed for our iniquities, they were the procuring cause of his death. To the same purpose, *ver. 8.* *For the transgression of my people was he smitten*, was the stroke upon him that should have been upon us; and so some read it. *He was cut off for the iniquity of my people, unto whom the stroke belonged, or was due.* He was delivered to death for our offences, *Rom. iv. 25.* Hence it is said to be according to the scriptures, according to this scripture that Christ died for our sins, *1 Cor. xv. 3.* Some read this, by the transgressions of my people, *i. e.* by the wicked hands of the Jews, who were in profession God's people, he was stricken, was crucified and slain, *Acts ii. 23.* But doubtless we are to take it in the former sense, which is abundantly confirmed by the angel's prediction of the Messiah's undertaking, solemnly delivered to Daniel, that he shall *finish transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity*, *Dan. ix. 24.*

5. The effect and consequent of this to us is our peace and hearing, *ver. 5.* (1.) Hereby we have peace; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; *i. e.* He by submitting to these chastisements slew the enmity, and settled an amity between God and man, he made peace by the blood of his cross: Whereas by sin we were become odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to his justice, through Christ God is reconciled to us, and not only forgives our sins, and saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship and fellowship with himself, and thereby peace, *i. e.* all good, comes unto us, *Eph. ii. 14.* He is our satisfaction to the justice of God, that we might be at ease, he gives satisfaction to the justice of God, that we might have satisfaction in our minds, might be of good cheer, knowing that through him our sins are forgiven us. (2.) Hereby we have healing; for by his stripes we are healed. Sin is not only a crime for which we are condemned to die, and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it is a disease, which tends directly to the death of our souls, and which Christ provided for the cure of. By his stripes, *i. e.* the sufferings he underwent, he purchased for us the Spirit and grace

grace of God to mortify our corruptions, which are the distempers of our souls, and to put our souls into a good state of health, that they may be fit to serve God, and prepared to enjoy him. And by the doctrine of Christ's cross, and the powerful arguments it furnisheth us with against sin, the dominion of sin is broken in us, and we are fortified against that which feeds the disease.

6. The effect and consequent of this to Christ was his resurrection and advancement to perpetual honour. This perfectly makes the offence of the cross to cease, he yielded himself to die as a sacrifice, as a lamb; and to make it evident that the sacrifice he offered of himself was accepted, we are told here, *ver. 8.* (1.) That he was discharged; *He was taken from prison and from judgment*; i. e. whereas he was imprisoned, in the grave, under a judicial process, lay there under an arrest for our debt, and judgment seemed to be given against him; he was by an express order from heaven taken out of the prison of the grave, an angel was sent on purpose to roll away the stone and set him at liberty, by which the judgment given against him was reversed and taken off, which redounds not only to his honour, but to our comfort; for being delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification. That discharge of the bail amounted to a release of the debt. (2.) That he was preferred: *Who shall declare his generation? his age, or continuance, so the word signifies*; the time of his life? he rose to die no more, death had no more dominion over him; he that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore; and who can describe that immortality to which he rose? or number the years and ages of it? and therefore he is advanced to this eternal life, because for the transgression of his people he became obedient unto death. We may take it as speaking the time of his usefulness; as David is said to serve his generation, and so to answer the end of living; who can declare how great a blessing Christ by his death and resurrection will be to the world? And some by his generation understand his spiritual seed; who can count the vast numbers of converts that shall by the gospel be begotten to him, like the dew of the morning?

*When thus exalted, he shall live to see
A numberless believing progeny
Of his adopted sons, the god-like race
Exceed the stars, that heav'n's high arches grace.*

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

Of which generation of his let us pray, as Moses did for Israel, *The Lord God of our fathers make them a thousand times so many more as they are, and bless them as he hath promised them*, Deut. i. 21.

10. ¶ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

In the foregoing verses the prophet had testified very particularly of the sufferings of Christ, yet mixing some hints of the happy issue of them; here he again mentions his sufferings, but largely foretells the glory that should follow. We may observe in these verses,

1. The services and sufferings of Christ's estate of humiliation. Come, and see how he loved us, see what he did for us.

1. He submitted to the frowns of heaven, *ver. 10.* Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he put him to pain, or torment, or grief. The scripture nowhere saith, that Christ in his sufferings underwent the wrath of God; but it saith here, (1.) That the Lord bruised him, not only permitted men to bruise him, but awakened his own sword against him, *Zech. xiii. 7.* They esteemed him smitten of God for some very great sin of his own, *ver. 4.* now it was true that he was smitten of God, but it was for our sin; the Lord bruised him, for he did not spare him, but delivered him up for us all, *Rom. viii. 32.* He it was that put the bitter cup into his hand, and obliged him to drink it, *John xviii. 11.* having laid upon him our iniquity. He it was that made him sin and a curse for us, and turned to ashes all his burnt-offering, in token of the acceptance of it, *Psal. xx. 3.* (2.) That he bruised him so as to put him to grief. Christ accommodated himself to this dispensation, and received the impressions of grief from his Father's delivering him up; and he was troubled to that degree that it put him into an agony, and he began to be amazed and very heavy. (3.) It pleased the Lord to do this; i. e. he determined to do it, it was the result of an eternal counsel; and he delighted in it, as it was an effectual method for the salvation of man, and the securing and advancing of the honour of God.

2. He substituted himself in the room of sinners, as a sacrifice. He made his soul an offering for sin; he himself explains this, *Matt. xx. 28.* that he came to give his life a ransom for many. When men brought bulls and goats as sacrifices for sin, they made them offerings, for they had an interest in them, God having put them under the feet of man; but Christ made himself an offering; it was his own act and deed; we could not put him in our stead, but he put himself, and said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit*, in a higher sense than David said, or could say it, *Father, I commit my soul to thee*, I deposit it in thy hands, as the life of a sacrifice and the price of pardons. Thus he shall bear the iniquities of the many that he designed to justify, *ver. 11.* shall take away the sin of the world by taking it upon himself, *John i. 29.* This is mentioned again, *ver. 12.* he bare the sin of many, who, if they had been to bear it themselves, it would have sunk them to the lowest hell. See how this string is harped upon, for whenever we think of the sufferings of Christ, we must see him in them bearing our sin.

3. He subjected himself to that which to us is the wages of sin; *ver. 12.* He hath poured out his soul unto death, poured it out as water, so little account did he make of it, when the laying of it down was the appointed means of our redemption and salvation; he loved not his life unto the death, and his followers the martyrs did likewise, *Rev. xii. 11.* Or rather, he poured it out as a drink-offering, to make his sacrifice complete; poured it out as wine, that his blood might be drink indeed, as his flesh is meat indeed to all believers. There was not only a colliquation of his body in his sufferings, *Psal. xxii. 14.* I am poured out like water, but a surrender of his spirit; he poured out that, even unto death, though he is the Lord of life.

4. He suffered himself to be ranked with sinners, and yet offered himself to be an intercessor for sinners, *ver. 12.*

(1.) It was a great aggravation of his sufferings, that he was numbered with transgressors; he was not only condemned as a malefactor, but was executed in company with two notorious malefactors, and he in the midst, as if he had been the worst of the three; in which circumstance of his suffering, the evangelist tells us this prophecy was fulfilled, *Mark xv. 27, 28.* Nay, the vilest malefactor of all, Barabbas, that was both traitor, thief and murderer, was put in election with him for the favour of the people, and carried it; for they would not have Jesus released, but Barabbas. In his whose life he was numbered among the transgressors; for he was called and counted a sabbath-breaker, a drunkard, and a friend to publicans and sinners.

(2.) It was a great commendation of his sufferings, and redounded very much to his honour, than in his suffering he made intercession for the transgressors, for those that reviled and crucified him; for he prayed, "Father, forgive them;" thereby shewing not only that he forgave them, but that he was now doing that upon which their forgiveness, and the forgiveness of all other transgressors, was to be founded. That prayer was the language of his blood, crying not for vengeance, but for mercy, and therein it speaketh better things than that of Abel, even for those who with wicked hands shed it.

2. The graces and glories of his estate of exaltation; and the graces he confers on us are not the least of the glories conferred on him. These are secured to him by the covenant of redemption, which these verses give us some idea of. He promiseth to make his soul an offering for sin, consents that the Father shall deliver him up, and undertakes to bear the sin of many; and for, and in consideration hereof, the Father promiseth to glorify him, not only with the glory he had as God before the world was, *John xvii. 5.* but with the glories of the Mediator.

1. He shall have the glory of an everlasting Father; under this title he was brought into this world, *Isa. ix. 6.* and he shall not fail to answer the title when he goes out of the world. This was the promise made to Abraham (who herein was a type of Christ) that he should be the father of many nations, and so be the heir of the world, *Rom. iv. 13, 17.* As he was the root of the Jewish church, and the covenant was made with him and his seed, so is Christ of the universal church, and with him and his spiritual seed is the covenant of grace made, which is grounded upon, and grafted in the covenant of redemption, which here we have some of the glorious promises of. It is promised,

(1.) That the Redeemer shall have a seed to serve him, and to bear up his name, *Psal. xxii. 30.* True believers are the seed of Christ: the Father gave them to him to be so, *John xvii. 6.* He died to purchase and purify them to himself, sell to the ground as a corn of wheat, that he might bring forth much fruit, *John xii. 24.* The Word, that incorruptible seed, of which they are born again, is his Word; the Spirit, the great author of their re-generation, is his Spirit, and it is his image that is formed in them, and they are conformed to.

(2.) That he shall live to see his seed; Christ's children have a living Father, and because he lives they shall live also, for he is their life. Though he died, he rose again, and left not his children orphans, but took effectual care to secure to them the Spirit, the blessing, and the inheritance of sons. He shall see a great increase of them; the word is plural, *he shall see his seeds*, multitudes of them, so many that they cannot be numbered.

(3.) That he shall himself continue to take care of the affairs of this numerous family; *he shall prolong his days.* Many when they see their seed, their seed's seed, have wished to depart in peace: but Christ will not commit the care of his family to any other, no, he shall himself live long, and of the increase of the government and peace there shall be no end, for he ever lives. Some refer it to believers, *he shall see a seed that shall prolong its days*, agreeing with *Psal. lxxxix. 29—36.* His seed shall endure for ever. While the world stands Christ will have a church in it, which he himself will be the life of.

(4.) That his great undertaking shall be successful, and shall answer expectation: *the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.* God's purposes shall take effect, and not one iota or title of them shall fall. Note, 1. The work of man's redemption is in the hands of the Lord Jesus, and it is in good hands; it is well for us they are in his, for our own hands are not sufficient for us, but he is able to the uttermost; they are in his hands who upholdeth all things. 2. It is the good pleasure of the Lord; which notes not only his counsel concerning it, but his complacency in it; and therefore God loved him and was well-pleased in him, because he undertook to lay down his life for the sheep. 3. It has prospered hitherto and shall prosper, whatever obstruction or difficulties have been or may be in the way of it. Whatever is undertaken according to God's pleasure shall prosper, *Isa. xlv. 10.* Cyrus, a type of Christ, shall perform all God's pleasure, *Isa. xlv. 28.* and therefore no doubt Christ shall. Christ was so perfectly well qualified for his undertaking, and prosecuted it with so much vigour, and it was from first to last so well laid, that it could not fail to prosper, to the honour of his Father, and the salvation of all his seed.

(5.) That he shall himself have abundant satisfaction in it, *ver. 11.* He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: he shall see it beforehand (so it may be understood); he shall with the prospect of his sufferings have a prospect of the fruit, and he shall be satisfied in the bargain; he shall see it when it is accomplished in the conversion and salvation of poor sinners. Note, 1. Our Lord Jesus was in travail of soul for our redemption and salvation, in great pain, but with longing desire to be delivered, and all the pains and throws he underwent were in order to it and hastened it on. 2. Christ doth and will see the blessed fruit of the travail of his soul, in the founding and building up of his church, and the eternal salvation of all that were given him. He will not come short of his end in any part of his work, but will himself see that he has not laboured in vain. The salvation of souls is a great satisfaction to the Lord Jesus: he will reckon all his pains well bestowed, and himself abundantly recompensed, if the many sons be by him brought through grace to glory. Let him have this, and he has enough. God will be sanctified and glorified, penitent believers will be justified, and then he is satisfied. Thus in conformity to Christ it should be a satisfaction to us, if we can do any thing to serve the interests of God's kingdom in the world. Let it always be our meat and drink, as it was Christ's to do God's will.

2. He shall have the glory of bringing in an everlasting righteousness; for so it was foretold concerning him, *Dan. ix. 24.* And here to the same purpose, by his knowledge, i. e. the knowledge of him, and faith in him, shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear the sins of many, and so lay a foundation for our justification from sin. Note, 1. The great privilege that flows to us from the death of Christ is justification from sin; our being acquitted from that guilt which alone can ruin us, and accepted into God's favour which alone can make us happy. 2. Christ that purchased our justification for us applies it to us, by his intercession made for us, his gospel preached to us, and his Spirit witnessing in us. The Son of man had power even on earth to forgive sin. 3. There are many whom Christ justifies;

justifies; not all, multitudes perish in their sins, yet many, even as many as he gave his life a ransom for, as many as the Lord our God shall call. He shall justify, not here and there one that is eminent and remarkable, but those of the many, the despised multitude. 4. It is by faith that we are justified, by our consent to Christ and the covenant of grace; in this way we are saved, because thus God is most glorified, free grace most advanced, self most abased, and our happiness most effectually secured. 5. Faith is the knowledge of Christ, and without knowledge there can be no true faith: Christ's way of gaining the will and affection is by enlightening the understanding, and bringing that unfeignedly to assent to divine truths. 6. That knowledge of Christ, and faith in him, by which we are justified, hath reference to him, both as a servant to God, and as a surety for us. (1.) As one that is employed for God, to pursue his designs, and secure and advance the interest of his glory: he is my righteous servant, and as such justifies men. God hath authorized and appointed him to do it, it is according to God's will, and for his honour that he doth it. He is himself righteous, and of his righteousness have all we received. He that is himself righteous (for he could not have made atonement for our sin, if he had had any sin of his own to answer for) is made of God to us righteousness, the Lord our righteousness. (2.) As one that hath undertaken for us. We must know him, and believe in him as one that bore our iniquities, saved us from sinking under the load by taking it upon himself.

3. He shall have the glory of obtaining an incontestible victory, and universal dominion, ver. 12. Because he has done all these good services, therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and according to the will of the Father, he shall divide the spoil with the strong, as a great general when he hath driven the enemy out of the field, takes the plunder of it for himself and his army; which is both an unquestionable evidence of the victory, and a recompence for all the toils and perils of the battle. Note, 1. God the Father has engaged to reward the services and sufferings of Christ with great glory; I will set him among the great, highly exalt him, and give him a name above every name; and with great riches, for he shall divide the spoil, shall have abundance of graces and comforts to bestow upon all his faithful soldiers. 2. Christ comes at his glory by conquest; he hath set upon the strong man armed, dispossessed him, and divided the spoil. He hath vanquished principalities and powers, sin and Satan, death and hell, the world and the flesh, these are the strong that he hath disarmed and taken the spoil of. 3. Much of the glory with which Christ is recompensed, and the spoil which he hath divided, consists in the vast multitudes of willing, faithful, loyal subjects that shall be brought in to him; for so some read it. I will give many to him, and he shall obtain many for a spoil: i. e. God will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Psalm ii. 8. His dominion shall be from sea to sea. Many shall be wrought upon by the grace of God to give up themselves to him to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him, and hereby he shall reckon himself honoured, and enriched, and abundantly recompensed for all he did and all he suffered. 4. What God designed for the Redeemer he shall certainly gain the possession of; I will divide it to him, and immediately it follows, he shall divide it, notwithstanding the opposition that is given to him; for as Christ finished the work that was given him to do, so God completed the recompence that was promised him for it; for he is both able and faithful. 5. The spoil which God divided to Christ, he divides it, it is the same word, he distributes it among his followers; for when he led captivity captive he received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men: for, as he has told us (Acts xx. 35.) he did himself reckon it more blessed and honourable to give than to receive. Christ conquered for us, and through him we are more than conquerors; he hath divided the spoils, the fruits of his conquest to all that are his: Let us therefore cast in our lot among them.

C H A P. LIV.

The death of Christ is the life of the church, and of all that truly belong to it; and therefore very fitly after the prophet had foretold the sufferings of Christ, he foretells the flourishing of the church, which is a part of his glory, and that exultation of him which was the reward of his humiliation: it was promised him that he should see his seed, and this chapter is an explication of that promise. It may easily be granted that it has a primary reference to the welfare and prosperity of the Jewish church after their return out of Babylon, which (as other things that happened to them) was typical of the glorious liberty of the children of God, which through Christ we are brought into; yet it cannot be denied but that it has a further and principal reference to the gospel church, into which the Gentiles were to be admitted. And the first words being understood by the apostle of the New Testament Jerusalem, Gal. iv. 26, 27. may serve as a key to the whole chapter, and that which follows. It is here promised concerning the Christian church, (1.) That though the beginnings of it were small, yet it should be greatly enlarged by the accession of many to it among the Gentiles that had been wholly destitute of church privileges, ver. 1—5. (2.) That though sometimes God might seem to withdraw from her, and suspend the tokens of his favour, yet he would return in mercy, and would not return to contend with them any more, ver. 6—10. (3.) That though for a while she was in sorrow, and under oppression, yet she should at length be advanced to greater honour and splendor than ever, ver. 11, 12. (4.) That knowledge, righteousness, and peace, should flourish and prevail, ver. 13, 14. (5.) That all attempts against the church should be baffled, and she should be screened from the malice of her enemies, ver. 14—17.

1. **S**ING, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. 2. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; 3. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. 4. ¶ Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. 5. For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

If we apply this to the state of the Jews after their return out of captivity, it is a prophecy of the increase of their nation after they were settled in their own land. Jerusalem had been in the condition of a wife written childless, or a desolate, solitary widow; but now it is promised that the city should be replenished, and the country peopled again; that not only the ruins of Jerusalem should be repaired, but the suburbs of it extended on all sides, and a great many buildings erected upon new foundations: That those estates which had for many years been wrongfully held by the Babyloian Gentiles, should now return to the right owners. God will again be a husband to them, and the reproach of their captivity, and the small number to which they were then reduced, shall be forgotten. And it is to be observed, that by the virtue of the ancient promise made to Abraham of the increase of his seed, when they were restored to God's favour they multiplied greatly. Those that first came up out of Babylon, were but forty-two thousand, Ezra ii. 64. about a fifteenth part of their number when they came out of Egypt, many came dropping to them afterwards, but we may suppose that to be the greatest number that ever came in a body; and yet above 500 years after, a little before their destruction by the Romans, a calculation was made by the number of paschal lambs, and the lowest computation by that rule (allowing only ten to a lamb, whereas they might be twenty) made the nation to near three millions; Josephus saith, seven and twenty hundred thousand and odd; *De Bell. Jud. lib. 7. cap. 17.*

But we must apply it to the church of God in general; I mean, the kingdom of God among men, God's city in the world, the children of God incorporated. Now observe,

1. The low and languishing estate of religion in the world, for a long time before Christianity was brought in. It was like one barren, that did not bear, or travail with child, was like one desolate, that had lost husband and children; the church lay in a little compass, and brought forth little fruit, the Jews were indeed by profession married to God, but few proselytes were added to them, the rising generations were unpromising, and serious godliness manifestly lost ground among them. The Gentiles had less religion among them than the Jews; their proselytes were in a dispersion; and the children of God, like the children of a broken, reduced family, were scattered abroad, John xi. 52. did not appear, nor make any figure.

2. Its recovery from this low condition, by the preaching of the gospel, and the planting of the Christian church.

1. Multitudes were converted from idols to the living God, those were the church's children, that were born again, were partakers of a new and divine nature by the word; more were the children of the desolate, than of the married wife; i. e. there were more good people found in the Gentile church (when that was set up) that had long been afar off, and without God in the world, than ever were found in the Jewish church. God's sealed ones out of the tribes of Israel are numbered, Rev. vii. 4. and they were but a remnant compared with the thousands of Israel; but those of other nations were so many, and crowded in so thick, and lay so much scattered in all parts, that no man could number them, ver. 9. Sometimes more of the power of religion is found in those places and families that have made little shew of it, and have enjoyed but little of the means of grace, than in others that have distinguished themselves by a flourishing profession; and then more are the children of the desolate, more the fruits of their righteousness, than those of the married wife; so the last shall be first.

Now this is spoken of as a matter of great rejoicings to the church, which is called upon to break forth into singing upon this account. The increase of the church is the joy of all its friends, and strengthens their hands. The longer the church has lain desolate, the greater will the transports of its joy be, when it begins to recover the ground it has lost, and to gain more. Even in heaven, among the angels of God, there is an uncommon joy for a sinner that repenteth; much more for a nation that doth so. If the barren fig-tree at length bring forth fruit, it is well, it shall rejoice and others with it.

2. The bounds of the church were extended much farther than ever before, ver. 2, 3. (1.) It is here supposed that the present state of the church is a tabernacle state; it dwells in tents, like the heirs of promise of old, Heb. xi. 9. its dwelling in mean and moveable, and of no strength against a storm: The city, the continuing city, is reserved for hereafter. A tent is soon taken down and shifted, so the candlestick of church privileges is soon removed out of its place, Rev. ii. 5. and when God pleaseth it is as soon fixed elsewhere. (2.) Though it be a tabernacle state, it is sometimes very remarkably a growing state; and if this family increase, no matter though it be in a tent. Thus it was in the first preaching of the gospel; it was the business of the apostles to disciple all nations, to stretch forth the curtains of the church's habitation, to preach the gospel there where Christ had not yet been named, Rom. xv. 20. to leaven those towns and countries with the gospel that had hitherto been strangers to it, and so to lengthen the cords of this tabernacle, that more might be inclosed in it; which would make it necessary to strengthen the stakes proportionably, that they might bear the weight of the enlarged curtains. The more numerous the church grows, the more cautious she must be to fortify herself against errors and corruptions; and to support her seven pillars, Prov. ix. 1. (3.) It was a proof of divine power going along with the gospel, that in all places it grew and prevailed mightily, Acts xix. 20. "It broke forth as the breaking forth of waters," on the right hand, and on the left, i. e. on all hands, the gospel spread itself into all parts of the world; there were eastern and western churches: The church's seed inherited the Gentiles, and the cities that had been desolate, i. e. destitute of the knowledge and worship of the true God, came to be inhabited, i. e. to have religion set up in them, and the name of Christ professed.

3. This was the comfort and honour of the church, ver. 4. Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, as formerly, of the straits of thy borders, and the fewness of thy children, which thine enemies upbraided thee with, but shalt forget the reproach of thy youth, because there shall be no more ground for that reproach. It was the reproach of the Christian religion in its youth, that none of the rulers or princes of this world embraced it, and that it was entertained and professed by a despicable handful of men; but after a while nations were disciplined, the empire became Christian, and then this reproach of its youth was forgotten.

4. This was owing to the relation in which God stood to his church, as her husband, ver. 5. Thy Maker is thy husband. Believers are said to be married to Christ, that they may bring forth fruit unto God, Rom. vii. 4. so the church is married to him, that she may bear and bring up a holy seed to God, that shall be accounted to him for a generation. Jesus Christ is the church's maker; by whom she is formed into a people; her Redeemer, by whom she is brought out of captivity, the bondage of sin, the worst of slaveries. This is he that espoused her to himself; and (1.) He is the Lord of hosts, that has an irresistible power, an absolute sovereignty, and an universal dominion! Kings that are lords of some hosts, find there are lords of other hosts, as many and mighty as their's; but God is the Lord of all hosts. (2.) He is the Holy One of Israel, the same that presided in the affairs of the Old Testament church, and was the Mediator of the covenant made with it. The promises made to the New Testament Israel,

Israel, are as rich and sure as those made to the Old Testament Israel; for he who is our redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. (3.) He is and shall be called the Lord of the whole earth, as God, and as Mediator, for he is the heir of all things; but then he shall be called so when the ends of the earth shall be made to see his salvation, all the earth shall call him their God, and have an interest in him. Long he had been called in a peculiar manner the God of Israel, but now, the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile being taken down, he shall be called the God of the whole earth, there where he has been, as at Athens itself, an *unknown God*.

6. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, faith thy God. 7. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, faith the LORD thy Redeemer. 9. For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wrath with thee, nor rebuke thee. 10. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, faith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

The seasonable succour and relief which God sent to his captives in Babylon, when they had a discharge from their bondage there, is here foretold, as a type and figure of all those consolations of God which are treasured up for the church in general, and all believers in particular, in the covenant of grace.

1. Look back to former troubles, and in comparison with them God's favours to his people appear very comfortable, *ver. 6, 7, 8*. Where observe,

(1.) How sorrowful the church's condition had been; she had been as a woman forsaken, whose husband was dead, or had fallen out with her, though she was the wife of his youth; upon which account she is grieved in spirit, takes it very ill, frets, and grows melancholy upon it; or as one refused and rejected, and therefore full of discontent. Note, Even those that are espoused to God may yet seem to be refused and forsaken, and may be grieved in spirit under the apprehensions of it; those that shall never be forsaken and left in despair, may yet for a time be perplexed and in distress. The similitude is explained, *ver. 7*. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, and *ver. 8*. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee. When God continues his people long in trouble, he seems to forsake them; so their enemies construe it, *Psal. lxxi. 11*, so they themselves misinterpret it, *Isa. xlix. 14*. When they are comfortless under their troubles, because their prayers and expectations are not answered, God hides his face from them, as if he regarded them not, nor designed them any kindness. This God owns he had done; for he keeps an account of the afflictions of his people, and though he never turned his face against them, (as against the wicked, *Psal. xxxiv. 16*.) he remembers how often he turned his back upon them. This arose indeed from his displeasure: it was in wrath that he forsook them, and hid his face from them, *Isa. lvii. 17*. yet it was but in a little wrath; not that God's wrath ever is a little thing, or to be made light of, *Who knows the power of his anger?* but little in comparison with what they had deserved, and what others justly suffer, on which the full vials of his wrath are poured out; he did not stir up all his wrath. But God's people, though they be sensible of never so small a degree of God's displeasure, cannot but be grieved in spirit because of it. And for the continuance of it, it was but for a moment, a small moment; for God doth not keep his anger against his people for ever, no, it is soon over; as he is slow to anger, so he is swift to shew mercy. The afflictions of God's people, as they are light, so they are but for a moment; a cloud that presently blows over.

(2.) How sweet the returns of mercy would be to them, when God shall come and comfort them according to the time that he afflicted them. God called them into covenant with himself, then when they were forsaken and grieved; he called them out of their afflictions, then when they were most pressing, *ver. 6*. God's anger endures for a moment, but God will gather his people when they think themselves neglected; will gather them out of their dispersions, that they may return in a body to their own land; will gather them into his arms, to protect them, embrace them and bear them up; and will gather them at last to himself; *will gather the wheat into the barn*: he will have mercy on them, which supposeth the turning away of his anger, and the admitting of them again into his favour. God's gathering of his people takes rise from his mercy, not any merit of theirs, and it is with great mercies, *ver. 7*. with everlasting kindness, *ver. 8*. The wrath is little, but the mercies great; the wrath for a moment, but the kindness everlasting. See how one is set over-against the other, that we may neither despond under our afflictions, nor despair of relief.

2. Look forward to future dangers, and in defiance of them. God's favours to his people appear very constant, and his kindness everlasting; for it is formed into a covenant, here called a *covenant of peace*, because it is founded in reconciliation, and is inclusive of all good. Now,

1. This is as firm as the covenant of providence; it is as firm as the waters of Noah, i. e. as that promise which was made concerning the deluge, that there should never be the like again to disturb the course of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, *ver. 9*. God then contended with the world in great wrath, and for a full year, and yet at length returned in mercy, everlasting mercy; for he gave his word, which was as inviolable as his oath, that Noah's flood should never return, that he would never drown the world again; see *Gen. viii. 21, 22*.—ix. 11. And God hath ever since kept his word, though the world has been very provoking; and he will keep it to the end; for the world that now is, is reserved unto fire. And thus inviolable is the covenant of grace: *I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee*, as I have been, and *rebuke thee*, as I have done. He will not be so angry with them as to cast them off, and break his covenant with them, *Psal. lxxxix. 34*, nor rebuke them as he hath rebuked the Heathen, to destroy them, and put out their name for ever and ever, *Psal. ix. 5*.

2. It is more firm than the strongest parts of the visible creation, *ver. 10*. The mountains shall depart, which are called everlasting mountains, and the hills be removed, though they are called perpetual hills, *Hab. iii. 6*. Sooner shall they remove, than God's covenant with his people be broken. Mountains have sometimes been shaken by earthquakes, and removed, but the promises of God were never broken by the shock of any event. The day

will come when all the mountains shall depart, and all the hills be removed, not only the tops of them covered, as they were by the waters of Noah, but the roots of them torn up; for the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up; but then the covenant of peace between God and believers shall continue in the everlasting bliss of all those who are the children of that covenant. Mountains and hills signify great men, men of bulk and figure. Do these mountains seem to support the skies (as Atlas) and bear them up? they shall depart and be removed, creature-confidences shall fail us, *in vain is salvation hoped for from those hills and mountains*; but the firmament is firm, and answers its name, when those who seem to prop it are gone; when our friends fail us our God doth not, nor doth his kindness depart. Do these mountains threaten and seem to top the skies; and bid defiance to them (as Pelion and Ossa)? do the kings of the earth, and the rulers set themselves against the Lord? they shall depart and be removed; great mountains that stand in the way of the salvation of the church shall be made plain, *Zech. iv. 7*, but God's kindness shall never depart from his people, for whom he loves he loves to the end; nor shall the covenant of his peace ever be removed, for he is the Lord that hath mercy on his people. Therefore the covenant is immovable and inviolable, because it is built not on our merit, which is a mutable, uncertain thing, but on God's mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting.

11. ¶ O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundation with sapphire. 12. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. 13. And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. 14. In righteousness shall thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee. 15. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: who-soever shall gather together against thee, shall fall for thy sake. 16. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waste to destroy. 17. ¶ No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, faith the LORD.

Very precious promises are here made to the church in her low condition, that God would not only continue his love to his people under their troubles as before, but that he would restore them to their former prosperity, nay, that he would raise them to greater prosperity than any they had yet enjoyed. In the foregoing chapter we had the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, here we have the humiliation and exaltation of the church; for if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. Observe,

1. The distressed state the church is here reduced to by the providence of God, *ver. 11*. O thou afflicted, poor, and indigent society, that art tossed with tempest, like a ship driven from her anchors by her storm, and hurried into the ocean, where she is ready to be swallowed up by the waves, and in this condition not comforted by any compassionate friend that will sympathize with thee, or suggest to thee any encouraging considerations, *Eccles. iv. 4*. not comforted by any allay to thy trouble, or prospect of deliverance out of it. This was the condition of the Jews in Babylon, and afterwards for a time under Antiochus; it is often the condition of Christian churches and of particular believers; without are fightings, within are fears, like the disciples in a storm, ready to perish, and where is their faith;

2. The glorious state the church is here advanced to by the promise of God. God takes notice of the afflicted, distressed state of his church, and comforts her when she is most disconsolate, and has no other comforter. Let the people of God, when they are afflicted and tossed, think they hear God speaking comfortably to them by these words, taking notice of their griefs and fears, what afflictions they are under, what toils they are in, and what comforts their case calls for; when they bemoan themselves, God bemoans them, and speaks to them with pity, *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted*; for in all their afflictions he is afflicted. But this is not all; he engages to raise her up out of her affliction, and encourageth her with the assurance of great things he would do for her, both for her prosperity, and for the securing of that prosperity to her.

1. Whereas now she lay in disgrace, God promised that which would be her beauty and honour, which would make her easy to herself, and amiable in the eyes of others.

(1.) This is here promised by a similitude taken from a city, and it is an apt similitude for the church is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; whereas now Jerusalem lay in ruins, a heap of rubbish, it shall not only be rebuilt but beautified, and appear more splendid than ever; the stones shall not only be laid firm, but laid fine, laid with fair colours, they shall be glistening stones, 1 Chron. xxix. 2. The foundations shall be laid or garnished with sapphires, the most precious of the precious stones here mentioned; for Christ the church's foundation, and the foundation of the apostles and prophets, are precious above any thing else. The windows of this house, city, or temple shall be made of agates, the gates of carbuncles, and all the borders, the walls that enclosed the courts, or the boundaries by which her limits are marked, the mere stones, shall be of pleasant stones, *ver. 12*. Never was this literally true; but it intimates, (1.) That God having graciously undertaken to build his church, we may expect that to be done for it, that to be wrought in it, which is very great and uncommon. (2.) That the glory of the New Testament church shall far exceed that of the Jewish church, not in external pomp and splendour, but in those gifts and graces of the Spirit which are infinitely more valuable; that wisdom which is more precious than rubies, *Prov. iii. 15*. than the precious onyx and the sapphire, and which the Topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal, *Job xxviii. 16--19*. (3.) That the wealth of this world, and those things of it that are accounted most precious, shall be despised by all the true living members of the church as having no value, no glory in comparison with that which far excelleth. That which the children of this world lay up in their treasures, and too often in their hearts, the children of God make pavements of and put under their feet, the fittest place for it.

(2.) It is here promised in the particular instances of those things that shall be the beauty and honour of the church, which are knowledge, holiness, and love, the very image of God in which man was created, renewed and restored upon it. And these are the sapphires and carbuncles, the precious

cious and pleasant stones with which the gospel-temple shall be enriched and beautified, and these wrought by the power and efficacy of those doctrines, which the apostle compares to gold, silver, and precious stones, that are to be built upon the foundation, 1 Cor. iii. 12. Then the church is all-glorious,

1. When it is full of the knowledge of God, and that is promised here, ver. 13. *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.* The church's children being born of God, shall be taught of God; being his children by adoption, he will take care of their education. It was promised, ver. 1. that the church's children shall be many; but lest we should think that being many, as sometimes it happens in numerous families, they will be neglected, and not have instruction given them so carefully as if they were but few, God here takes that work into his own hand, they shall all be taught of the Lord, and none teacheth like him. (1.) It is a promise of the means of instruction, and those means authorized by a divine institution; they shall all be taught of God, i. e. they shall be taught by those whom God shall appoint, and whose labours shall be under his direction and blessing. He will ordain the methods of instruction, and by his word and ordinances will diffuse a much greater light than the Old Testament church had. Care shall be taken for the teaching of the church's children, that knowledge may be transmitted from generation to generation, and that all may be enriched by it from the least even unto the greatest. (2.) It is a promise of the Spirit of illumination. Our Saviour quotes it with application to gospel-grace, and makes it to have its accomplishment in all those that were brought to believe in him, John vi. 45. *It is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God;* from whence he infers, that those, and those only, come to him by faith, that have heard and learned of the Father, that are taught by him as the truth is in Jesus, Eph. iv. 21. There shall be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace upon Christians to teach them all things, John xiv. 26.

2. When the members of it live in love and unity among themselves; great shall be the peace of thy children. Peace may be taken here for all good. As where no knowledge of God is, no good can be expected; so that those that are taught of God to know him, are in a fair way to prosper for both worlds; *Great peace have they that know and love God's law*, Psalm cxix. 167. But it is often put for love and unity, and so we may take it. All that are taught of God are taught to love one another, 1 Thess. iv. 9. and that will keep peace among the church's children, and prevent their falling out by the way.

3. When holiness reigns, for that above any thing is the beauty of the church, ver. 14. *In righteousness shall thou be established;* the reformation of manners, the restoration of purity, the due administration of public justice, and the prevailing of honesty and fair dealing among men, are the strength and stability of any church or state. The kingdom of God set up by the gospel of Christ, is not meat and drink, but this righteousness and peace, holiness and love.

2. Whereas now she lay in danger, God promiseth that which would be her protection and security; God engageth here that though in the day of her distress without were fightings, and within were fears, now she should be safe from both.

1. There shall be no fears within, ver. 14. *Thou shalt be far from oppression;* those that have oppressed thee shall be removed, those that would oppress thee shall be restrained, and therefore thou shalt not fear; but mayest look upon it as a thing at a mighty distance, that thou art now in no danger of. Thou shalt be far from terror, not only from evil, but from the fear of evil, for it shall not come near thee, so as to do thee any hurt, or to put thee in any fright. Note, Those are far from terror that are far from oppression; for it is as great a terror as any other to the people to have the rod of government turned into the serpent of oppression; because against this there is no fence, nor flight from it.

2. There shall be no fightings without; though attempts should be made upon them to insult them, to invade their country, or besiege their towns, they should all be in vain, and none of them succeed, ver. 15. It is granted, *They shall surely gather together against thee,* thou must expect it, the confederate force of hell and earth will be renewing their assaults: As long as there is a devil in hell, and a persecutor out of it, God's people must expect frequent alarms; but, 1. God will not own them, will not give them either commission or countenance; they gather together, hand joins in hand, but it is not by me: God gave them no such order as he did to Sennacherib, to take the spoil, and take the prey, Isa. x. 6. And therefore, 2. Their attempt will end in their own ruin; *Whosoever shall gather together against thee,* he they never so many and never so mighty, they shall not only be baffled, but they shall fall for thy sake, or they shall fall before thee, which shall be the just punishment of their enmity to thee. God will make them to fall for the sake of the love he bears to his church, and the care he hath of it, in answer to the prayers made by his people, and in pursuance of the promises made to them; they shall fall, and thou mayest stand, Psalm xxvii. 2.

Now that we may with the greatest assurance depend upon God for the safety of his church, we have here,

1. The power of God over the church's enemies asserted, ver. 16. The truth is, they have no power but what is given them from above, and he that gave them their power can limit and restrain them, *hitherto they shall go, and no further.* (1.) They cannot carry on their designs without arms and weapons of war; and the smith that makes those weapons is God's creature, and he gave him his skill to work in iron and brass, *Exod. xxxi. 3, 4.* and particularly to make proper instruments for warlike purposes. It is melancholy to think, as if men did not die fast enough of themselves, how ingenious and industrious they are to make instruments of death, and to find out ways and means to kill one another. "The smith blows the coals in the fire," to make his iron malleable, to soften it first that it may be hardened into steel, and so "he may bring forth an instrument proper for their work that seek to destroy." It is the iron age that is the age of war. But "God has created the smith," and therefore can tie his hands, so that the project of the enemy shall miscarry (as many a project has done) for want of arms and ammunition. Or the smith that forges the weapons, is perhaps put here for the council of war that forms the design, blows the coals of contention, and brings forth the plan of the war; these can do no more than God will let them. (2.) They cannot carry it on without men, they must have soldiers, and it is "God that created the waster to destroy;" military men value themselves upon their great offices and splendid titles, and even the common soldiers call themselves gentlemen; but God calleth them wasters made to destroy, for wasting and destruction is their business. They think their own ingenuity, labour, and experience, made them soldiers; but it was God that created them, and gave them strength and spirit for that hazardous employment; and therefore he not only can restrain them, but will serve his own purposes and designs by them.

2. The promise of God concerning the church's safety solemnly laid down, as the heritage of the servants of the Lord, ver. 17. as that which they may depend upon and be confident of, That God will protect them from their adversaries both in camps and courts.

1. From their field adversaries, that think to destroy them by force and violence, and dint of sword; *No weapon that is formed against thee* (though

never so artfully formed by the smith that blows the coals, ver. 16. though never so skilfully managed by the waster that seeketh to destroy) *shall prosper;* it shall not prove strong enough to do any harm to the people of God; it shall miss its mark, shall fall out of the hand, or perhaps recoil in the face of him that useth it against thee. It is the happiness of the church that no weapon formed against it shall prosper long, and therefore the folly of its enemies will at length be made manifest to all, for they are but preparing instruments of ruin for themselves.

2. From their law-adversaries, that think to run them down under colour of right and justice: When the weapons of war do not prosper, there are tongues that rise in judgment; both are included in the gates of hell that seek to destroy the church; for they had their courts of justice as well as their magazines and military stores in their gates. The tongues that rise in judgment against the church, are such as either demand a dominion over it, as if God's children were their lawful captives, pretending an authority to oppress their consciences; or such as misrepresent them, and falsely accuse them, and by slanders and calumnies endeavour to make them odious to the people and obnoxious to the government. This the enemies of the Jews did to incense the kings of Persia against them, *Ezra iv. 12. Est. iii. 8.* But these insulting, threatening tongues thou shalt condemn; thou shalt have wherewith to answer their insolent demands, and to put to silence their malicious reflections. *Thou shalt do it by well-doing,* 1 Pet. ii. 15. by doing that which will make thee manifest in the consciences even of thine adversaries, that thou art not what thou art represented to be. *Thou shalt condemn them,* i. e. God shall condemn them for thee; *He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light,* Psalm xxxvii. 6. Thou shalt condemn them as Noah condemned the old world that reproached him, by building the ark, and so saving his house in contempt of their contempts. The day is coming when God will reckon with wicked men for all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, Jude 15.

The last words refer not only to this promise but to all that go before; this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. God's servants are his sons, for he has provided an inheritance for them, rich, sure, and indefeasible; God's promises are their heritage for ever, *Psalm cxix. 111. And their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.* God will clear up the righteousness of their cause before men; it is with him, for he knows it, it is with him, for he will plead it. Or their reward for their righteousness, and for all that which they have suffered unrighteously, is of God, that God who judgeth in the earth, and with whom *verily there is a reward for the righteous.* Or their righteousness itself, all that in them is good and right, it is of God, who works in them; it is of Christ, who is made righteousness to them. Whoever God designs an heritage for hereafter, in them he will work righteousness now.

C H A P. LV.

As we had much of Christ in the fifty-third chapter, and much of the church of Christ in the fifty-fourth chapter, so in this chapter we have much of the covenant of grace made with us in Christ. The sure mercies of David which are promised here, ver. 3. are understood by the apostle of the benefits which flow to us from the resurrection of Christ, Acts xiii. 34. which may serve as a key to this chapter; not but that it was intended for the comfort of the people of God that lived then, especially of the captives in Babylon, and other the dispersed of Israel; but unto us was this gospel preached as well as unto them, and much more clearly and fully in the New Testament. Here is, (1.) A free and gracious invitation to all to come and take the benefit of gospel-grace, ver. 1. (2.) Pressing arguments to enforce this invitation, ver. 2-4. (3.) A promise of the success of this invitation among the Gentiles, ver. 5. (4.) An exhortation to repentance and reformation, with great encouragement given to hope for pardon and forgiveness thereupon, ver. 6-9. (5.) The ratification of all this, with the certain efficacy of the word of God, ver. 10, 11. and a particular instance of the accomplishment of it in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, which was intended for a sign of the accomplishment of all these other promises.

1. **H**O, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. 4. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. 5. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Here, 1. We are all invited to come and take the benefit of that provision which the grace of God has made for poor souls in the new covenant, of that which is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, chap. liv. 17. and not only their heritage hereafter, but their cup now, ver. 1. Observe,

(1.) Who are invited; *Ho, every one:* Not the Jews only, to whom first the word of salvation was sent, but the Gentiles, the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, are called to this marriage supper, whoever can be picked up out of the highways and the hedges. It intimates that in Christ there is enough for all, and enough for each; that ministers are to make a general offer of life and salvation to all; that in gospel-times the invitation should be more largely made than it had been, and should be sent to the Gentiles; and that the gospel-covenant excludes none that do not exclude themselves. The invitation is published with an Oyez; *Ho, take notice of it; He that hath ears to hear let him hear.*

(2.) What is the qualification required in those that shall be welcome; they must thirst. All shall be welcome to gospel-grace, upon those terms only, that gospel-grace be welcome to them. Those that are satisfied with the world and its enjoyments for a portion, and seek not for a happiness in the favour of God; those that depend upon the merit of their own works for a righteousness, and see no need they have of Christ and his righteousness; these do not thirst, they have no sense of their need, are in no pain or uneasiness about their souls, and therefore will not condescend so far as to be beholden to Christ: but those that thirst are invited to the waters, as those

those that labour and are heavy laden are invited to Christ for rest. Note, where God gives grace he first gives to thirst after it; and where he has given to thirst after it, he will give it, *Psaln lxxxi. 10.*

(3.) Whither they are invited: *Come ye to the waters.* Come to the Water-side, to the ports, and keys, and wharfs, on the navigable rivers, into which goods are imported, thither come and buy, for that is the market-place of foreign commodities; and to us they would have been for ever foreign, if Christ had not brought in an everlasting righteousness. Come to Christ, for he is the fountain opened, he is the rock smitten. Come to holy ordinances, to those streams that make glad the city of our God; come to them, and though they may seem to you plain and common things, like waters, yet to those who believe in Christ, the things signified will be as wine and milk, abundantly refreshing. Come to the healing waters, come to the living waters; whoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life, *Rev. xxii. 17.* And our Saviour referred to it, *John vii. 37. If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.*

(4.) What they are invited to do: (1.) Come and buy. Never did any tradesman court customers that he hopes to get by, so as Christ courts us to that which we only are to be the gainers by: Come and buy, and we can assure you you shall have a good bargain, which you will never repent of or lose by. Come and buy, i. e. make it your own, by an application of the grace of the gospel to yourselves; make it your own upon Christ's terms, nay your own upon any terms, and stand not dodging about the terms, or deliberating whether you shall agree to them. (2.) Come and eat; make it still more your own, as that which we eat is more our own than that which we only buy. We must buy the truth, not that we may lay it by to be looked at, but that we may feed and feast upon it, and that the spiritual life may be nourished and strengthened by it. We must buy necessary provision for our souls, be willing to part with any thing, though never so dear to us, so that we may but have Christ, and his graces and comforts; part with sin, because it is an opposition to Christ; part with all opinion of our own righteousness, as standing in competition with Christ; and part with life itself, its most necessary supports, rather than quit our interest in Christ. And when we have bought what we need, let us not deny ourselves the comfortable use of it, but enjoy it, and eat the labour of our hands: buy and eat.

(5.) What is the provision they are invited to: Come and buy wine and milk, which will not only quench the thirst (fair water would do that) but nourish the body, and revive the spirits. The world comes short of our expectation, we promise ourselves at least water in it, but we are disappointed of that, as the troops of Tema, *Job vi. 19.* But Christ out-does our expectations, we come to the waters, and would be glad of them, but we find there wine and milk, which were the staple commodities of the tribe of Judah, and which the Shiloh of that tribe is furnished with to entertain the gathering of the people to him, *Gen. xlix. 10, 11. His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.* We must come to Christ to have milk for babes, to nourish and cherish them that are but lately born again; and with him strong men shall find that which will be a cordial to them; they shall have wine to make glad their hearts. We must part with our puddle-water, nay with our poison, that we may procure this wine and milk.

(6.) The free communication of this provision; buy it without money, and without price. A strange way of buying, not only without ready money, that is common enough, but without any money, or the promise of any; yet it seems not so strange to those who have observed Christ's counsel to Laodicea that was wretchedly poor, to come and buy, *Rev. iii. 17, 18.* Our buying without money intimates, (1.) That the gifts offered us are invaluable, and such as no price can be set upon: Wisdom is that which cannot be gotten for gold. (2.) That he who offers them has no need of us or of any returns we can make him: He makes us these proposals not because he has occasion to sell, but because he has a disposition to give. (3.) That the things offered are already bought and paid for; Christ purchased them at the full value, with price, not with money, but his own blood, *1 Pet. i. 19.* (4.) That we should be welcome to the benefits of the promise, though we are utterly unworthy of them, and cannot make a tender of any thing that looks like a valuable consideration. We ourselves are not of any value, nor any thing we have or can do, and we must own it, that if Christ and heaven be our's, we may see ourselves for ever indebted to free grace.

2. We are earnestly pressed and persuaded (and O that we would be prevailed with!) to accept this invitation, and make this good bargain for ourselves.

1. That which we are persuaded to is, to hearken to God, and to his proposals; *Hearken diligently unto me, ver. 2.* Not only give me the hearing; but approve of what I say, and apply it to yourselves; *ver. 3. Incline your ear,* as we do to that which we find ourselves concerned in, and pleased with; bow the ear, and let the proud heart stoop to the humbling methods of the gospel; bend the ear this way, that you may hear with attention and remark; hear and come unto me, not only come and treat with me, but comply with me, come up to my terms. Accept God's offers as very advantageous, answer his demands as very fit and reasonable.

2. The arguments used to persuade us to this are taken,

1. From the unspeakable wrong we do to ourselves if we neglect and refuse this invitation; "wherefore do ye spend money for that which is 'not bread?' which will not yield you, no not beggars food, dry bread, when with me you may have wine and milk without money? wherefore do you spend 'your labour' and toil for that which will not be so much as dry bread to you, for it 'satisfied not?'"

See here, (1.) The vanity of the things of this world, "they are not 'bread,' not proper food for a soul, they afford no suitable nourishment or refreshment: Bread is the staff of the natural life, but it affords no support at all to the spiritual life. All the wealth and pleasure in the world will not make one meal's meat for a soul. Eternal truth and eternal good are the only food for a rational and immortal soul; the life of which consists in reconciliation and conformity to God, and in union and communion with him, which the things of the world will not at all besfriend. "They satisfy 'not,' they yield not any solid comfort and content to the soul, nor enable it to say, now I have what I would have; nay, they do not satisfy even the appetites of the body, the more men have the more they would have *Eccles. i. 8.* Haman was unsatisfied in the midst of his abundance. They flatter, but they do not fill; they please for a while, like the dream of a hungry man who wakes and his soul is empty. They soon surfeit, but they never satisfy; cloy a man, but not content him, or make him truly easy. It is all vanity and vexation."

(2.) The folly of the children of this world; they spend their money and labour for these uncertain, unsatisfying things. Rich people live by their money, poor people by their labour; but both mistake their truest interest; while the one is trading, the other toiling for the world, both promising themselves satisfaction and happiness in it, but both miserably disappointed, God vouchsafes compassionately to reason with them; Wherefore do you thus act against your own interest? Why do you suffer yourselves to be thus imposed upon? Let us reason thus with ourselves, and let the result of these reasonings be a holy resolution not to labour for the meat that perisheth,

but for that which endures to everlasting life, *John vi. 27.* Let all the disappointments we meet with in the world help to drive us to Christ, and to seek for satisfaction in him only. This is the way to make that sure that will be made sure.

2. From the unspeakable kindness we do to ourselves, if we accept this invitation and comply with it.

1. Hereby we secure to ourselves present pleasure and satisfaction. If you hearken to Christ you "eat that which is good," which is both wholesome and pleasant, good in itself, and good for you. God's good word and promise, a good conscience, and the comforts of God's good Spirit, are a continual feast to those that hearken diligently and obediently to Christ. Their souls shall *delight themselves in fulness, i. e.* in the richest and most grateful delights. Here the invitation is not, come and buy, lest that should discourage, but come and eat, come and entertain yourselves with that which will be abundantly pleasing: "Eat, O friends." It is sad to think that men should need to be courted thus to their own bliss.

2. Hereby we secure to ourselves lasting happiness: "Hear, and your 'soul shall live,' you shall not only be saved from perishing eternally, but you shall be eternally blessed; for less than that cannot be the life of an immortal soul. The words of Christ are spirit and life, life to spirits, *John vi. 33—63.* the words of this life, *Acts v. 20.* On what easy terms is happiness offered us, it is but hear and you shall live.

3. The great God graciously secures all this to us: "Come to me, and 'I will make an everlasting covenant with you, 'I will put myself into covenant relations, and under covenant engagements to you, and thereby settle upon you 'the sure mercies of David.'" Note, 1. If we come to God to serve him, he will covenant with us to do us good, and make us happy; such is his condescension to us and concern for us. 2. God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant; its contrivance from everlasting, its continuance to everlasting. 3. The benefits of this covenant are mercies suited to our case, who being miserable are the proper objects of mercy. They come from God's mercy, and are ordered every way in kindness to us. 4. They are the mercies of David, such mercies as God promised to David, *Psaln lxxxix. 28, 29, &c.* which are called the mercies of David his servant and are appealed to by Solomon, *2 Chron. vi. 42.* It shall be a covenant as sure as that with David, *Jer. xxxiii. 25, 26.* The covenant of royalty was a figure of the covenant of grace, *2 Sam. xxiii. 5.* Or rather, by David here we are to understand the Messiah. Covenant mercies are all his mercies; they are purchased by him, they are promised in him, they are treasured up in his hand, and out of his hand they are dispensed to us: He is the mediator and trustee of the covenant; to him that is applied, *Acts xiii. 34.* They are the *τὸ ἅγιον*, the holy things of David; the word used there, and by the LXX here; for here they are confirmed by the holiness of God, *Psaln lxxxix. 35.* and are intended to advance holiness among men. 5. They are sure mercies; the covenant being well ordered in all things is sure. It is sure in the general proposal of it; God is real and sincere, serious and in earnest in the offer of these mercies. It is sure in the particular application of it to believers; God's gifts and callings are without repentance; they are the mercies of David, and therefore sure, for in Christ the promises are all yea and amen.

3. Jesus Christ is promised for the making good of all the other promises which we are invited to accept of, *ver. 4.* He is that David, whose sure mercies all the blessings and benefits of the covenant are: And God has given him in his purpose and promise, hath constituted and appointed him; and in the fulness of time will as surely send him, as if he were already come, to be all that to us which is necessary to our having the benefit of these preparations. He has given him freely, for what more free than gift? there was nothing in us to merit such a favour, but Christ is the gift of God. We want one, (1.) To attest the truth of the promises which we are invited to take the benefit of; and Christ is given for a witness, that God is willing to receive us into his favour upon gospel terms, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, that we may venture our souls upon those promises with an entire satisfaction. Christ is a faithful witness, we may take his word; a competent witness, for he lay in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was perfectly apprised of the whole matter: Christ as a prophet testifies the will of God to the world, and to believe is to receive his testimony. (2.) To assist us in cloing with the invitation and coming up to the terms of it; we know not how to find the way to the waters where we are to be supplied, but Christ is given to be a leader; not what to do that we may be qualified for it, and sharers in it, but he is given for a commander, to shew us what to do, and enable us to do it. Much difficulty and opposition lies in our way to Christ; we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, but to animate us for the conflict we have a good captain, like Joshua; a leader and commander to tread our enemies under our feet, and to put us in possession of the land of promise. Christ is a commander by his precepts, and a leader by his example; our business is to obey him and follow him.

4. The master of the feast being fixed, it is next to be furnished with guests, for the provision shall not be lost or made in vain, *ver. 5.* (1.) The Gentiles shall be called to this feast, shall be invited out of the highways and the hedges. *Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, i. e.* that was not formerly called and owned as thy nation; that thou didst not send prophets to as to Israel, that people which God knew above all the families of the earth: The Gentiles shall now be favoured so as they never were before their knowing God is said to be rather their being known of God, *Gal. iv. 9.* (2.) They shall come at the call, *Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee;* those that had long been far off from Christ shall be made nigh; that had been running from him shall run to him, with the greatest speed and alacrity imaginable: There shall be a concourse of believing Gentiles to Christ, who being lifted up from the earth will draw all men to him. Now see the reason, (1.) Why the Gentiles will thus flock to Christ, it is because of the Lord his God, because he is the Son of God, and is declared to be so with power; because they now see his God is one with whom they have to do, and there is no coming to him as their God, but by making an interest in his Son. Those that are brought to be acquainted with God, and understand how the concern lies between them and him, cannot but run to Jesus Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man, and there is no coming to God but by him. (2.) Why God will bring them to him, because he is the Holy One of Israel, true to his promises, and he hath promised to glorify him, by giving him the heathen for his inheritance. When the Greeks began to inquire after Christ, he said, *The hour is come that the son of man shall be glorified, John xii. 22, 23.* And his being glorified in his resurrection and ascension, was the great argument by which multitudes were wrought upon to run to him.

6. ¶ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly

dantly pardon. 8. For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, faith the LORD. 9. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so *are* my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud; that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it. 12. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands. 13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.

We have here a further account of that covenant of grace which is made with us in Jesus Christ, both what is required and what is promised in the covenant, and those considerations that are sufficient abundantly to confirm our believing compliance with, and reliance on, that covenant. And this gracious discovery of God's good will to the children of men, is not to be confined either to the Jew or to the Gentile, to the Old Testament, or to the New, much less to the captives in Babylon. No, both the precepts and the promises here are given to all, *to every one that thirsts after happiness*, ver. 1. And who doth not? Hear this and live.

1. Here is a gracious offer made of pardon and peace, and all happiness to poor sinners upon gospel terms, ver. 6, 7.

1. Let them pray, and their prayers shall be heard and answered, ver. 6. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.* Seek him whom you have left by revolting from your allegiance to him; and whom you have lost by provoking him to withdraw his favour from you: *Call upon him now while he is near*, and within call. Observe here (1.) The duties required. (1.) Seek the Lord; seek to him, and enquire of him as your oracle; *ask the law at his mouth, what will thou have me to do?* Seek for him, and enquire after him as your portion and happiness; seek to be reconciled to him, and acquainted with him, and to be happy in his favour. Be sorry that you have lost him, be solicitous to find him; take the appointed method of finding him, making use of Christ as your way, the spirit as your guide, and the word as your rule. (2.) Call upon him, pray to him to be reconciled; and being reconciled, pray to him for every thing else you have need of. (2.) The motives made use of to press these duties upon us: While he may be found, while he is near. 1. It is implied that now God is near, and will be found, so that it shall not be in vain to seek him and to call upon him: Now his patience is waiting on us, this word is calling to us, and his Spirit striving with us; now improve your advantages and opportunities, for now is the accepted time. But, 2. There is a day coming when he will be afar off, and will not be found; when the day of his patience is over, and his spirit will strive no more. There may come such a time in this life, when the heart is incurably hardened; however, at death and judgment the door will be shut, Luke xvi. 26.—xiii. 25, 26. Mercy is now offered, but then judgment without mercy will take place.

2. Let them repent and reform, and their sins shall be pardoned, ver. 7. Here is a call to the unconverted, to the wicked, and the unrighteous man; to the wicked, that live in known gross sins, to the unrighteous that live in the neglect of plain duties: To them is the word of this salvation sent, and all the assurance given that can be, that penitent sinners shall find God a pardoning God. Observe here, 1. What it is to repent. There are two things in it, (1.) It is to turn from sin, it is to forsake it; it is to leave it with loathing and abhorrence, never to return to it again. The wicked must forsake his way, his evil way, as one would forsake a false way that will never bring us to the happiness we aim at; and a dangerous way, that leads to destruction: Let him not take one step more in that way. Nay, there must be not only a change of the way, but a change of the mind; the unrighteous must forsake his thoughts: Repentance, if it be true, strikes at the root, and washed the heart from wickedness. We must alter our judgments concerning persons and things, dislodge the corrupt imaginations, and quit the vain pretences which an un sanctified heart shelters itself with. Note, It is not enough to break off from evil practices, but we must enter a caveat against evil thoughts: Yet this is not all, (2.) To repent is to return to the Lord; to return to him as our God, return to him as to our sovereign Lord against whom we have rebelled, and to whom we are concerned to reconcile ourselves: As to the fountain of life and living waters which we had forsaken for broken cisterns. 2. What encouragement we have thus to repent. If we do so, (1.) God will have mercy; he will not deal with us as our sins have deserved, but will have compassion on us:—Miserable is the object of mercy. Now both the consequences of sin, by which we are become *truly miserable*, Ezek. xvi. 5, 6. and the nature of repentance, by which we are made sensible of our misery, and are brought to *bemoan ourselves*, Jer. xxxi. 18, both make us objects of pity, and with God there are tender mercies. (2.) He will abundantly pardon: He will multiply to pardon, so the word is, as we have multiplied to offend. Though our sins have been very great, and very many; and though we have often backslidden, and are still prone to offend, yet God will repeat his pardon, and welcome even backslidden children that return to him in sincerity.

2. Here are encouragements given us to accept this offer, and to venture our souls upon it; For look which way we will we find enough to confirm us in our belief of the validity and value of it.

If we look up to heaven, we find God's counsels there high and transcendent; his thoughts and ways infinitely above our's, ver. 8, 9. The wicked are bid to forsake their *evil ways and thoughts*, (ver. 7.) and to return to God, i. e. to bring their ways and thoughts to concur and comply with his, for (saith he) my thoughts and ways are not as your's; your's are conversant only about things beneath, they are of the earth earthy; but mine are above, as the heaven is high above the earth; and if you would approve yourselves true penitents, your's must be so too, and our affections must be set on things above. Or, rather it is to be understood as an encouragement to us to depend upon God's promise to pardon sin upon repentance; sinners may be ready to fear that God will not be reconciled to them, because they could not find in their hearts to be reconciled to one that had so basely and so frequently offended them; but (saith God) my thoughts in

this matter are not as your's, but as far above them as heaven is above the earth. They are so in other things; men's sentiments concerning sin, and Christ and holiness; concerning this world and the other, are vastly different from God's; but in nothing more than in the matter of reconciliation. We think God apt to take offence, and backward to forgive; that if he forgives once, he will not forgive a second time: Peter thought it a great deal to *forgive seven times*, Matt. xviii. 21. and a hundred pence goes far with us, but God meets returning sinners with pardoning mercy; he forgives freely, and, as he gives, it is without upbraiding: We forgive and cannot forget, but when God forgives sin, he remembers it no more. Thus God invites sinners to return to him, by possessing them with *good thoughts of him*, as Jer. xxxi. 20.

2. If we look down to this earth, we find God's word there powerful and effectual, and answering all its great intentions, ver. 10, 11. Observe here,

(1.) The efficacy of God's word in the kingdom of nature. *He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth*; appoints when it shall come, to what degree, and how long it shall lie there; he saith *to the small rain, and the great rain of his strength*, Job xxxvii. 6. and according to his order they come down from heaven, and do *whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world*, whether it be for correction, or for his land, or for mercy, as it follows there, ver. 12, 13. It returneth not *re infected*, but watereth the earth, which he is therefore said to do *from his chambers*, Psal. civ. 13. and the watering of the earth is in order to its fruitfulness; thus he maketh it to bring forth and bud, for the products of the earth depend upon the dews of heaven, and thus it gives not only bread to the eater, present maintenance to the owner and his family, but feed likewise to the sower, and that he may have food for another year. The husbandman must be a sower as well as an eater, else he will soon see the end of what he has.

(2.) The efficacy of his word in the kingdom of providence and grace, which is as certain as the former; so shall my word be as powerful in the mouth of prophets, as it is in the hand of providence; it shall not return unto me void, or unable to effect what it was sent for, or meeting with an insuperable opposition? no, it shall accomplish that which I please; for it is the declaration of his will, according to the counsel of which he worketh all things; and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. This assures us, 1. That the promises of God shall all have their full accomplishment in due time, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail, 1 Kings viii. 56. These promises of mercy and grace shall have as real an effect upon the souls of believers for their sanctification and comfort as ever the rain had upon the earth to make it fruitful. 2. That according to the different errands on which the word is sent, it will have its different effects: if it be not a favour of life unto life, it will be a favour of death unto death: if it doth not convince the conscience and soften the heart, it will fear the conscience and harden the heart; if it do not ripen for heaven, it will ripen for hell; see *Isai. vi. 9*. One way or other it will take effect. 3. That Christ's coming into the world, as the dew from heaven (*Hos. xiv. 5*.) will not be in vain. For if Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious in the conversion of the Gentiles; to them therefore the tenders of grace must be made when the Jews refuse them, that the wedding may be furnished with guests, and the gospel not return void.

3. If we take a special view of the church, we shall find what great things God hath done, and will do for it, ver. 12, 13. *Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.* This refers, 1. To the deliverance and return of the Jews out of Babylon: They shall go out of their captivity, and be led forth towards their own land again. God will go before them as surely, though not as sensibly, as before their father, in the pillar of cloud and fire. They shall go out, not with trembling, but with triumph; not with any regret to part with Babylon, or any fear of being fetched back, but with joy and peace. Their journey home over the mountains shall be pleasant, and they shall have the good-will and good wishes of all the countries they pass through. The hills and their inhabitants shall, as in a transport of joy, break forth into singing; and if the people should altogether hold their peace, even the trees of the field would attend with their applauses and acclamation. And when they come to their own land it shall be ready to bid them welcome; for whereas they expect to find it all over-grown with briars and thorns, it shall be set with fir-trees and myrtle-trees; for though it lay desolate, yet it *enjoyed its sabbaths*, Lev. xxvi. 34. which, when they were over, like the land after the sabbatical year, it was the better for. And this shall redound much to the honour of God, and be to him for a name. But, 2. Without doubt, it looks farther; this shall be for an everlasting sign: that is, (1.) The redemption of the Jews out of Babylon shall be a ratification of those promises that relate to gospel times. The accomplishment of the predictions relating to that great deliverance, would be a pledge and earnest of the performance of all the other promises, for thereby it shall appear that he is faithful who hath promised. (2.) It shall be a representation of the blessings promised, and a type and figure of them. (1.) Gospel grace will set those at liberty that were in bondage to sin and Satan. They shall go out, and be led forth; Christ shall make them free, and then they shall be free indeed. (2.) It will fill those with joy that were melancholy, *Psal. xiv. 7. Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.* The earth and the inferior part of the creation shall share in the joy of this salvation, *Psal. xcvi. 11, 12*. (3.) It will make a great change in men's characters. Those that were as thorns and briars, good for nothing but the fire, nay, hurtful and vexatious, shall become graceful and useful as the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree. Thorns and briars came in with sin, and were the fruits of the curse, *Gen. iii. 18*. The raising of pleasant trees in the room of them, signifies the removal of the curse of the law and the introduction of gospel blessings. The church's enemies were as thorns and briars, but instead of them God will rise up friends to be her protection and ornament. Or, it may note the world's growing better; instead of a generation of thorns and briars, there shall come up a generation of fir-trees and myrtles; the children shall be wiser and better than the parents. And, lastly, in all this God shall be glorified. It shall be to him for a name, by which he will be made known and praised, and by it the people of God shall be encouraged; it shall be for an everlasting sign of God's favour to them, assuring them that though it may for a time be clouded it shall never be cut off. The covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant, for the present blessings of it are signs of everlasting ones.

C H A P. LVI.

After the exceeding great and precious promises of gospel grace, typified by temporal deliverances, which we had in the foregoing chapter, we have here (1.) A solemn charge given to us all to make conscience of our duty, as we hope to have the benefit of those promises, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Great encouragement given to strangers that were willing to come under the bonds of the covenant, assuring them of the blessings of the covenant, ver. 3—8. (3.) A high charge drawn up against the watchmen of Israel that were careless and unfaithful in the discharge of their duty, ver. 9—12, which seems to be the beginning of a new

a new sermon, by way of reproof and threatening, which is continued in the following chapters. And the word of God was intended for conviction, as well as for comfort and instruction in righteousness.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. 2. Blessed is the man *that* doeth this, and the son of man *that* layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

The scope of these verses is to shew, that when God is coming towards us in a way of mercy, we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty.

1. God here tells us what are his intentions of *salvation* to us, *ver. 1.* *Salvation is near to come.* The great salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ (for that was the salvation of which the prophets enquired and searched gently, 1 Pet. i. 10) typified by the salvation of the Jews from Sennacherib or out of Babylon. Observe, (1.) The gospel salvation is the salvation of the Lord, it was contrived and brought about by him; he glories in his. (2.) In that salvation God's righteousness is revealed, which is much the beauty of the gospel; that St. Paul makes this the ground of glorying in it, *Rom. i. 17.* *Because therein is the righteousness of God from faith to faith.* The law revealed the righteousness required by sinners stand condemned, but the gospel reveals the righteousness by which all be stand acquitted. (3.) The Old Testament does law this salvation coming, and drawing near to them, long before it came; and they had notice by the prophets of its approach. As Daniel understood by Jeremiah's books the approach of the redemption out of Babylon, at the end of seventy years; so others understood by Daniel's books the approach of our redemption by Christ, at the end of seventy weeks of years.

2. He tells us what are his expectations of duty from us in consideration thereof. Say not, we see the salvation near, and therefore we may live as we list, for there is no danger now of missing it, or coming short of it; that is turning the face of God into wantonness: But, on the contrary, when the salvation is near, double your guard against sin. Note, The fuller assurances God gives us of the performance of his promises, the stronger obligations he lays us under to obedience. Now the salvation here spoken of is come, yet there being a still farther salvation in view, the apostle presseth duty upon us Christians with the same argument, *Rom. xiii. 11.* Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. That which is here required to qualify and prepare us for the approaching salvation is,

1. That we be honest and just in all our dealings. *Keep ye judgment, and do justice:* Walk by rule, and make conscience of what ye say and do; that you do not wrong to any; render to all their dues exactly; and in exacting what is due to you, keep up a court of equity in your own bosom, to moderate the rigours of the law. Be ruled by that golden rule of doing as you would be done by. Magistrates must administer justice wisely and faithfully; this is required to evidence the sincerity of our faith and repentance, and to open the way of mercy. *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* God is true to us, let us be so to one another.

2. That we religiously observe the sabbath day, *ver. 2.* We are not just if we rob God of his time. Sabbath sanctification is here put for all the duties of the first table, the fruits of our love to God; as justice and judgment for all those of the second table, the fruits of our love to our neighbour. Observe, (1.) The duty required, which is to keep the sabbath; to keep it as a talent we are to trade with, as a treasure we are intrusted with; keep it holy, keep it safe, keep it with care and caution, keep it from polluting it; allow neither yourselves nor others, either to violate the holy rest, nor omit the holy work of that day. If this be intended primarily for the Jews in Babylon, it was fit they should be particularly put in mind of this; because when by reason of their distance from the temple, they could not observe the other institutions of their law, yet they might distinguish themselves from the heathen by putting a difference between God's day and other days; but it being required more generally of man, and the son of man, it intimates, that sabbath sanctification should be a duty in gospel times, when the bounds of the church should be enlarged, and other rites and ceremonies abolished. Observe, Those that would keep the sabbath from polluting it, must put on resolution; must not only do this, but lay hold on it, for sabbath time is precious, but is very apt to slip away, if we take not great care; and therefore we must lay hold on it, and keep our hold; must do it, and persevere in it. (2.) The encouragement we have to do this duty; blessed is he that doeth it. The way to have the blessing of God upon our employments all the week, is to make conscience, and make a business of sabbath sanctification; and in doing so we shall be the better qualified to do judgment and justice. The more godliness, the more honesty, 1 Tim. ii. 2.

3. That we have nothing to do with sin. *Blessed is the man that keepeth his hand from doing evil; any wrong to his neighbour, in body, goods, or good name: or more generally, any thing that is displeasing to God and hurtful to his own soul.* Note, the best evidence of our having kept the sabbath well, will be a care to keep a good conscience all the week. By this it will appear we have been in the mount with God, if our faces shine in a holy conversation before men.

3. ¶ Neither let the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.

4. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant; 5. Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. 6. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; 7. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices *shall be accepted* upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. 8. The Lord GOD which gathered the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet

will gather *others* to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

The prophet is here in God's name encouraging those that were hearty in joining themselves to God, and yet laboured under great discouragements.

1. Some were discouraged because they were not of the seed of Abraham. They had, indeed, given themselves to the Lord, had bound their souls with a bond to be his for ever, and had sought a life of religion, to break off from the world, and to devote themselves entirely to the service and honour of God; but they were not of the seed of Abraham, and they doubted whether God would accept of them, because they were not of his seed, ver. 3. They were Gentiles, that is, they were not of the seed of Israel; and aliens to the covenants of promise, and had no part or lot in the matter; they

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Now suitable answers.

1. To those that are without the honour to be thought of, yet had none to whom the sign of circumcision, and of the law.

2. What a good character is in affliction; and those only are entitled to some measure answer these characters. (1.) He that was appointed them to be kept. In the primitive times, he was asked, hast thou kept holy the Lord's day? he would not be a Christian, and dare not do otherwise. (2.) In their whole conversation they choose those things that please God; they do that which is good; they do it with a sincere design to please God in it; they do it of choice, and with delight; And if sometimes, through infirmity, they come short in doing that which pleaseth God, yet they choose it, they endeavour it, and aim at it. Note, Whatever is God's pleasure should without dispute be our choice. (3.) They take hold of his covenant, and that is a thing that pleases God as much as any thing. The covenant of grace is proposed and proffered to us in the gospel; to take hold on it is to consent to it, to accept the offer, and come up to the terms; deliberately and sincerely to take God to be to us a God, and to give up ourselves to him to be to him a people. Taking hold of the covenant notes an entire and resolute consent to it, taking hold, as those that are afraid of coming short; catching at it as a good bargain, and as those that are resolved never to let it go, for it is our life; and we took hold of it as a criminal took hold of the horns of the altar to which he fled for refuge.

2. What a great deal of comfort they may have if they answer this character, though they are not built up into families, *ver.* 5. *Unto them will I give a better place*, and name. It is supposed that there is a place and a name, which we have from sons and daughters, that is valuable and desirable. It is a pleasing notion we have, that we live in our children when we are dead. But there is a better place, and a better name, which those have that are in covenant with God, and it is sufficient to balance the want of that. A place and a name, rest and reputation; a place to live comfortably in themselves, and a name to live creditably with among their neighbours; they shall be happy, and may be easy both at home and abroad. Though they have not children to be the music of their house, or arrows in their quiver, to keep them in countenance when they speak with their enemies in the gate, yet they shall have a place and a name more than equivalent. For, (1.) God will give it them, will give it them by promise, he will himself be both their habitation and their glory, their place and their name. (2.) He will give it them in his house, and within his walls; there they shall have a place, shall be planted so as to take root, *Psalms* xcii. 13. *Shall dwell all the days of their life*, *Psalms* xxvii. 4. They shall be at home in communion with God, as Anna that departed not from the temple night nor day. There they shall have a name; a name for good things with God and good people, is a name better than that of sons and daughters. Our relation to God, our interest in Christ, our title to the blessings of the covenant, and our hopes of eternal life, are things that give us in God's house a blessed place and a blessed name. (3.) It shall be an everlasting name, that shall never be extinct, shall never be cut off; like the place and name of angels, who therefore marry not, because they die not. Spiritual blessings are unspeakably better than those of sons and daughters; for children are a certain care, and may prove the greatest grief and shame of a man's life, but the blessings we partake of in God's house, are a sure and constant joy and honour, comforts which cannot be embittered.

dantly pardon. 3. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. 12. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

We have here a further account of that covenant of grace which is made with us in Jesus Christ, both what is required and what is promised in the covenant, and those considerations that are sufficient abundantly to confirm our believing compliance with, or reliance on, that covenant. And this gracious discovery of God's good will to the children of men, is not to be confined either to the Jew or to the Gentile, to the Old Testament, or to the New, much less to the captives in Babylon. No, both the precepts and the promises here are given to all, to every one that believeth after his heart, ver. 1. And who doth not? Hear this at home.

1. Here is a gracious offer made of pardon and peace, and all happiness to poor sinners upon gospel terms, ver. 1, 2.

1. Let them pray, and their prayers shall be heard and answered, ver. 6. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.* Seek him whom you have left by revolting from your allegiance to him; and whom you have lost by provoking him to wrath. Draw his favour from you: *Call upon him now while he is near,* and within call. Observe here (1.) The duties required. (1.) Seek the Lord; seek to him, and enquire of him as your oracle; *and the Lord will answer thee, when thou shalt call.* Seek for him, and enquire after him as your portion in happiness; seek to be reconciled to him, and acquainted with him, and to be happy in his favour. Be sorry that you have lost him, be solicitous to find him; take the appointed method of finding him, making use of Christ as your way, the Spirit as your guide, and the word as your rule. (2.) Call upon him, pray to him to be reconciled; and being reconciled, pray to him for every thing else you have need of. (2.) The motives made use of to press these duties upon us: While he may be found, while he is near. 1. It is implied that now God is near, and will be found, so that it shall not be in vain to seek him and to call upon him: Now his patience is waiting on us, this word is calling to us, and his Spirit striving with us; now improve your advantages and opportunities, for now is the accepted time. But, 2. There is a day coming when he will be afar off, and will not be found; when the day of his patience is over, and his Spirit will strive no more. There may come such a time in this life, when the heart is severely hardened; however, at death and judgment the door will be shut, *1. Cor. x. 2.—xii. 2.* Mercy is now offered, but then judgment will be done, and will take place.

2. Let them repent and reform, and their sins shall be pardoned, ver. 7. Here is a call to the wicked, ver. 13, to the wicked, and the unrighteous man; to the wise, that they may know their sins, to the unrighteous that know not the way of peace, ver. 1. For this is the word of this salvation for all, and the promise given that can be, that penitent sinners shall find God, and a living God. Observe here (1.) What is required. There are two things chiefly. (1.) It is to turn from sin, it is to forsake it; it is to leave it, and to bring it to the ground, never to come to it again. The wicked must forsake his way, as one would forsake a filthy way that would never bring us to the happiness we seek, and a dangerous way, that leads to destruction. It is to make one's heart clean from sin. Nay, there must be not only a turning from the way, but a change of the mind; the mind must be renewed, and the heart must be renewed. It is to be true, it is to be good, and washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. We must alter our old ways concerning persons and things, if we hope to escape damnation, and to put the vain pretences which our hearts and consciences tell us of. Note. This is not enough to break off from evil practices; if we must enter a caveat against evil thoughts: Yet this is not all. (2.) To repent is to return to the Lord; to return to him as our God, to return to him as to our sovereign Lord against whom we have rebelled, and from whom we are concerned to remove our love. As to the manner of the turning and living ways which we had taken for broken cisterns. 2. What encouragement we have that to repent. If we do so, (1.) God will have mercy; he will not deal with us as our sins have deserved, but will have compassion on us: *Mercy is the object of mercy.* Now both the consequences of sin, by which we are become *truly miserable*, *Ezek. xvi. 5, 6.* and the nature of repentance, by which we are made sensible of our misery, and are brought to *humble ourselves*, *Jer. xxi. 12.* both make us objects of pity, and with God there are tender mercies. (2.) He will abundantly pardon: He will multiply to pardon, to the word is, as we have multiplied to offend. Though our sins have been very great, and very many; and though we have often backslid, and are still prone to offend, yet God will repeat his pardon, and welcome even backslidden children that return to him in sincerity.

2. Here are encouragements given us to accept this offer, and to venture our souls upon it; For look which way we will we find enough to confirm us in our belief of the validity and value of it.

If we look up to heaven, we find God's counsels there high and transcendent; his thoughts and ways infinitely above ours, ver. 8, 9. The wicked are bid to forsake their evil ways and thoughts, (ver. 7.) and to return to God, i. e. to bring their ways and thoughts to concur and comply with his, for (saith he) my thoughts and ways are not as your's; your's are conversant only about things beneath, they are of the earth earthy; but mine are above, as the heaven is high above the earth; and if you would approve yourselves true penitents, your's must be so too, and our affections must be set on things above. Or, rather it is to be understood as an encouragement to us to depend upon God's promise to pardon sin upon repentance; sinners may be ready to fear that God will not be reconciled to them, because they could not find in their hearts to be reconciled to one that had so basely and so frequently offended them; but (saith God) my thoughts in

this matter are not as your's, but as far above them as heaven is above the earth. They are to in other things; men's sentiments concerning sin, and Christ and holiness; concerning this world and the other, are vastly different from God's; but in nothing more than in the matter of reconciliation. We think God apt to take offence, and backward to forgive; that if he forgives once, he will not forgive a second time: Peter thought it a great deal to *forgive seven times*, *Matt. xviii. 21.* and a hundred pence goes far with us, but God meets returning sinners with pardoning mercy; he forgives freely, and, as he gives, it is without upbraiding: *3. J. forgive and forget*, but when God forgives sin, he remits it as it were, and he invites sinners to return to him, by possessing them with a *living righteousness*, as *Jer. xxxi. 20.*

2. If we look down to this earth, we find God's word there powerful and effectual, and answering all its great intention, *ver. 10, 11.* Observe here.

(1.) The efficacy of God's word in the kingdom of nature. *He saith, and the fountains gush out, and the rivers run.* He saith, and the rivers run, and how long it shall be there; he saith, *and the rivers shall run down to the sea.* *Job xxxviii. 6.* and according to his order they come down from heaven, and do whatsoever he commandeth them to, *in the face of the world,* whether it be for correction, or for his land, or for mercy, as it follows there, *ver. 12, 13.* It returneth not to the sea, but watereth the earth, which he is therefore said to do from his chambers, *Psalm. civ. 13.* and the watering of the earth is in order to its fruitfulness; thus he maketh it to bring forth and bud, for the product of the earth depend upon the dews of heaven, and thus it gives not only bread to the eater, present maintenance to the owner and his family, but seed likewise to the sower, and that he may have food for another year. The husbandman must be a sower as well as an eater, else he will soon see the end of what he has.

(2.) The efficacy of his word in the kingdom of providence and grace, which is as certain as the former; so shall my word be as powerful in the mouth of prophets, as it is in the hand of providence; it shall not return unto me void, or unable to effect what it was sent for, or meeting with an insuperable opposition? no, it shall accomplish that which I please; for it is the declaration of his will, according to the counsel of which he worketh all things; and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. This assures us, 1. That the promises of God shall all have their full accomplishment in due time, and not one jot or tittle of them shall fail, *1 Kings viii. 56.* These promises of mercy and grace shall have as real an effect up in the souls of believers for their justification and comfort as ever the rain had upon the earth to make it fruitful. 2. That according to the different errands on which the word is sent, it will have its different effects: if it be not a favour of life unto life, it will be a favour of death unto death; if it doth not convince the conscience and soften the heart, it will fear the conscience and harden the heart; if it do not ripen for heaven, it will ripen for hell; see *1 Tim. vi. 3.* One way or other it will take effect. 3. That Christ's coming into the world, as the day from heaven (*Hos. xiv. 5.*) will not be in vain. For if Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious in the conversion of the Gentiles; to them therefore the tenders of grace must be made when the Jews refuse them, that the wedding may be furnished with guests, and the gospel not return void.

3. If we take a special view of the church, we shall find what great things God hath done, and will do for it, *ver. 12, 13.* *They shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.* This refers, 1. To the deliverance and return of the Jews out of Babylon: They shall go out of their captivity, and be led forth towards their own land again. God will go before them as surely, though not as swiftly, as before their father, in the pillar of cloud and fire. They shall go out, not with trembling, but with triumph; not with any regret to part with Babylon, or any fear of being led out, but with joy and peace. Then journey home over the mountains, and be pleasant, and they shall have the good-will and good-wishes of all the countries they pass through. The hills and their inhabitants shall, as in a transport of joy, break forth into singing; and all the people shall altogether hold their peace, even the trees of the field will attend with them their applauses and acclamations. And when they come to their own land it shall be ready to bid them welcome; for whereas they expect to find it all overgrown with thorns and thistles, it shall be set with fir-trees and myrtle-trees; for though it lay desolate, yet it enjoyed the blessing of God, *Lev. xxviii. 31.* which, when they were over, like the land after the biblical year, it was the better for. And this shall rebound much to the honour of God, and be to him for a name. But, 2. Without doubt, it looks farther; this shall be for an everlasting sign; that is, (1.) The redemption of the Jews out of Babylon shall be a ratification of those promises that relate to gospel times. The accomplishment of the prediction relating to that great deliverance, would be a pledge and earnest of the performance of all the other promises, for thereby it shall appear that he is faithful who hath promised. (2.) It shall be a representation of the blessings promised, and a type and figure of them. (1.) Gospel grace will set those at liberty that were in bondage to sin and Satan. They shall go out, and be led forth; Christ shall make them free, and then they shall be free indeed. (2.) It will fill those with joy that were melancholy, *Psalm. xiv. 7.* *Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.* The earth and the inferior part of the creation shall share in the joy of this salvation, *Psalm. xvi. 11, 12.* (3.) It will make a great change in men's characters. Those that were as thorns and briars, good for nothing but the fire, nay, hurtful and vexatious, shall become as good and as sweet as the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree. Thorns and briars came in with sin, and were the fruits of the curse, *Gen. iii. 18.* The taming of the thorns in the room of them, signifies the removal of the curse of the law and the introduction of gospel blessings. The church's enemies were as thorns and briars, but instead of them God will rise up friends to be her protection and ornament. Or, it may note the world's growing better; instead of a generation of thorns and briars, there shall come up a generation of fir-trees and myrtles; the children shall be wiser and better than the parents. And, lastly, in all this God shall be glorified. It shall be to him for a name, by which he will be made known and praised, and by it the people of God shall be encouraged; it shall be for an everlasting sign of his love to them, assuring them that though it may for a time be darkened, yet it shall never be cut off. The covenant of grace, an everlasting covenant, for ever present blessing, and it is high and everlasting grace.

C H A P. LVI.

After the exceeding great and precious promises of gospel grace, typified by temporal deliverances, which we had in the foregoing chapter, we have here (1.) A solemn charge given to a nation, as a consequence of our duty, as we hope to have the benefit of the promises, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) Great encouragement given to sinners that are under the curse of the law, and under the bonds of the covenant, assuring them that they shall be free from the curse of the covenant, *ver. 3—8.* (3.) A list chosen out of the watchmen of Israel that were called to the watch, and the discharge of their duty, *ver. 9—12.* which shall be the beginning of a new

new firmor, by way of reproof and threatening, which is contained in the following chapters, and the word of God was intended for our alarm, as well as for comfort and instruction in righteousness.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation *is* near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. 2. Blessed *is* the man *that* doeth this, and the son of man *that* layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

The scope of these verses is to shew, that when God is coming towards us in a way of mercy, we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty.

1. God here tells us what are his intentions of mercy to us, ver. 1. *Redemption is near to me.* The great salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ (for that was the salvation of which the prophets dreamed *and prophesied greatly*, 1 Pet. 1, 10) typified by the salvation of the Jews from bondage out of Babylon. Observe, (1.) The gospel salvation is the salvation of the Lord, it was contrived and brought about by him; he gloried in his. (2.) In that salvation God's righteousness is revealed, which is much the beauty of the gospel, that St. Paul makes this the ground of glorying in it, *Rom. 1, 17. Because therein is the right-oufulness of God from faith to faith.* The law revealed the righteousness of God by which sinners stand condemned, but the gospel reveals that by which all believers stand acquitted. (3.) The Old Testament foretold this salvation coming, and drawing near to them, long before it came; and they had notice by the prophets of its approach. As Daniel understood by Jeremiah's books the approach of the redemption out of Babylon, at the end of seventy years; to others understood by Daniel's books the approach of our redemption by Christ, at the end of seventy weeks of years.

2. He tells us what are his expressions of duty from us to our liberation thereof. Say not, we see the salvation near, and therefore we may live as we list, for there is no danger now of missing it, or losing that of it; that is turning the grace of God into wantonness. But, on the contrary, when the salvation is near, double your guard against sin. Note, The fuller assurances God gives us of the performance of his promises, the stronger obligations he lays us under to cleave to. Now the salvation here spoken of is come, yet there long a full trial of our faith in view, the apostle preleth duty upon us Christians with the promise of it, *Rom. xiii. 11.* Now is our salvation nearer than when we began to believe. That which is here required to qualify and prepare us for the approaching salvation is,

1. That we be honest and just in all our dealings. *Keep your word, and do justice:* Walk by rule, and make conscience of what you say and do, that you do not wrong to any; render to all that is due exactly; and in exacting what is due to you, keep up a count of equity in your own bosom, to moderate the rigour of the law. Be ruled by the golden rule of doing as you would be done by. Magistrates must administer justice wisely and faithfully; this is required to evidence the fidelity of our faith and repentance, and to open the way of mercy. *Report to the Lord of heaven as at hand.* God is true to us, let us be so to one another.

2. That we religiously observe the Sabbath day, *Lev. xix.* We are not just if we rob God of his time. Sabbath sanctification is here put for all the duties of the holy table, the fruits of our love to God; as infinite and judgment for all those of the second table, the fruits of our love to our fellow-creature. Observe, (1.) The duty required, which is to keep the Sabbath; to keep it as a talent we are to trade with, as a treasure we are intrusted with; keep it holy, keep it safe, keep it with care and caution, keep it from polluting it; give neither yourself nor others, either to violate the holy rest, nor omit the holy work of that day. It is to be intended generally for the Jews in Babylon, it was it they should be particularly put in mind of this; because when by reason of their distance from the temple, they could not observe the other institutions of their law, yet they might retain and the sacrifices from the heathen by putting a difference between their Sabbath and other days; but it being requisite for all ages, all sorts of men, and all sorts of nations, that Sabbath sanctification should be used in all ages and times, within the bounds of the christian religion be enlarged, and other religious ceremonies also added. Observe, Those that would keep the Sabbath from polluting it, must put on sanctification; must not only do this, but lay hold on it, for the Sabbath time is precious, but is very apt to slip away, if we take not great care; and therefore we must lay hold on it, and keep our hold; need do so, and persevere in it. (2.) The encouragement we have to do this duty; blessed is he that doeth it. The way to have the blessing of God upon the commandments all the week, is to make conscience, and make a habit of Sabbath sanctification; and in doing so we shall be the better qualified to do judgment and justice. The more godliness, the more holiness, 1 *Thim. ii. 15.*

5. That we have nothing to do with sin. *Rejoice* is the man that *keeps his hand from doing evil*; any wrong to his neighbour, in body, goods, or good name; or more generally, any thing that is displeasing to God and harmful to his own soul. Note, the best evidence of our having kept the Sabbath well, will be a care to keep a good conscience all the week. By this it will appear we have been in the mount with God, if our faces shine in a holy conversation before men.

3. ¶ Neither let the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I *am* a dry tree. 4. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant; 5. Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. 6. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; 7. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. 8. The Lord GOD which gathered the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet

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will gather *others* to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

The prophet is here in God's name encouraging those that were hearty in joining themselves to God, and yet laboured under great discouragement.

1 Some were disengaged because they were not of the seed of Abraham. They had joined themselves to the Lord, had been taken into a bond to be his for ever, and had got and lost the right to break it from the world and carnality. Some ourselves entirely to the service and honour of God: whether God would accept of them, be-

cause they were not of the house of Israel, ver. 3. They were Gentiles, that were strangers to the covenants of promise, and had no part or lot in the matter; they

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land of the living. I have
noted, My dear friends, the
labours of your brethren
in the north.

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1. To those that have been called to the ministry of the Gospel, yet had none to whom they might minister, and who were in the light of circumcision, and the promises of the Gospel.

1. What a good character this shows, and affecting as it is! These only are entitled to be called Christians, who have no measure and no reserve in their character. (1.) They are not content when it is appointed them to be happy. In the promise, "In meekness shall ye be made kings," hath thou kept holy the Lord thy God, thou shalt be well, thou shalt be happy, and thou shalt be a Christian, and dare not to sit aside. (2.) They are not willing to content when they choose to do things that please God, though it be to themselves going; they do it with a sincere design to please God, and not to please themselves, and with delight. And at sometime, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, considering that which pleases God, yet they choose to do even that which is not so pleasant to them. Note, Whatsoever is God's pleasure, is ours, that is, it is proper to our choice. (3.) They take hold of his covenant, and are so strong that please God as much as any thing. The covenant of grace is proposed and proffered to us in the gospel; to take hold of it is to consent to it, to accept the offer, and come up to the terms, that is, to have a heart to take God to be true, a God, and to give up ourselves to be his, to claim a people. Taking hold of the covenant notes, is to love and adore him, to consent to it, taking hold, as doth that are afraid of coming down, and putting it off as a good bargain, and doth that are ready to enter for it, but go, for it is our loss, and we took hold of it as a criminal took hold on the lion, of the altar to which he tied for a tag.

What a great deal of comfort is there in the thought, that, if we are planted in God's house, then we are not liable to be cut off, as the fig-tree and the vine are. If we be planted in him, then we shall be able to bear the fruit of his life, which we have been long endeavouring to do, but in vain. It is a pleasing notion, when we see that we are planted in him, when we are saved. But there is a better place, and a better name, than that which we have in the covenant with God, and it is further to be desired, that we may be so. A place, and a name, rest shall be put under you, and ye shall be able to stand, and ye shall have a name to live eternally, and shall be able to stand, and ye shall be happy, and may be able to do these things. Though we have but children to be the name of their bodies, or names in the world, yet we shall be able to be in countenance when they speak with their enemies in the world, and they shall have a place and a name more than equivalent. For, (1.) God will give it them, will give it them by promise, he will baptize them with their habitation and their glory, their place and their name. (2.) He will give it them in his house, and within his walls; there they shall have a place, shall be planted to us to take root, *Psaln xvi. 13.* Shall dwell at the days of their life, *Psaln xxvii. 1.* They shall be at home in communion with God, as Anna that departed not from the temple night nor day. There they shall have a name; a name for good things with God and good people, is a name better than that of sons and daughters. Our relation to God, our interest in Christ, our title to the blessings of the covenant, and our hopes of eternal life, are things that give us in God's house a blessed place and a blessed name. (3.) It shall be an everlasting name, that shall never be extinct, shall never be cut off; like the place and name of angels, who therefore marry not, because they die not. Spiritual blessings are unspeakably better than those of sons and daughters; for children are a certificate, and may prove the greatest grief and shame of a man's life, but the blessings we partake of in God's house, are a sure and constant joy and honour, comforts which cannot be embittered.

2. To those that are themselves the children of strangers,

1. It is here promised that they shall now be welcome to the church, ver. 6, 7. When God's Israel come out of Babylon, let them bring as many of their neighbours along with them as they can persuade to come, and God will find room enough for them all in his house.

And here (as before) we may observe,

(1.) Upon what terms they shall be welcome; let them know that God's Israel, when they come out of Babylon, will not be plagued as they were when they came out of Egypt with a mixed multitude, that went with them, but were not cordially for them; no, the sons of the strangers shall have a place and a name in God's house, provided, (1.) That they forsake other gods, all rivals and pretenders whatsoever, and *join themselves to the Lord*, to a: to become *one spirit*, 1 Cor. vi. 17. (2.) That they join themselves to him as subjects to their prince and soldiers to their general, by an oath of fidelity and obedience, to serve him not occasionally, as one would serve a turn, but to be constantly his servants, entirely subject to his command, and

devoted to his interest. (3.) That they join themselves to him as friends to his honour and the interests of his kingdom in the world, to love the name of the Lord, to be well-pleased with all the discoveries he hath made of himself, and all the memorials they make of him. Observe, Serving him and loving him go together, for those that love him truly, will serve him faithfully, and that obedience is most acceptable to him which flows from a principle of love, as well as most pleasant to us, for then *his commandments are not grievous*, 1 John v. 3. (4.) That they keep themselves from polluting it, for the stranger that is within thy gates is not to be desired to do that. (5.) That they take hold of the covenant, and come under the bonds of it, and put in for the benefits of it.

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shall come to the temple, and shall be bid welcome, and shall be shown open to them. The temple was made of stones, and these words, *Matt. xxi. 13.* This is my Father's house, and gospel church, *Heb. ix. 8, 9.* For now concerning this house, it is proposed as a house of sacrifice, but a house of prayer.

of God's people shall be meetings for prayer, in which they shall join together, as a token of their united faith and mutual love. (2.) That it shall be a house of prayer, not for the people of the Jews only, but for all people. This was fulfilled when Peter was made, not only to perceive it himself, but to tell it the world, that *every nation, he that fears God and works righteousness, is accepted of him*, Acts x. 35. It had been declared again and again, that *the stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death*, but Gentiles shall now be looked upon no longer as strangers and foreigners, Eph. ii. 19. And it appears by Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, both that it was primarily intended for a house of prayer, and that strangers should be welcome to it, 1 Kings viii. 30—41.

And it is intimated here, *ver.* 8. that when the Gentiles are called in they shall be incorporated into one body with the Jews, that as Christ saith *John* x. 16. There may be *one fold and one shepherd*; for, (1.) God will gather the outcasts of Israel; many of the Jews that had by their unbelief cast themselves out, shall by faith be brought in again *a remnant according to the election of grace*, *Rom.* xi. 5. Christ came to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, *Matt.* xv. 24. to *gather their outcasts*, *Psal.* cxlvii. 2. and *restore their preferred*, *Isa.* xlix. 6. and *to be their glory*, *Luke* ii. 32. (2.) He will gather others also to him, besides his own outcasts that are gathered to him; or though some of the Gentiles have come over now and then into the church that shall not serve (as some may think) to answer the extent of these promises; no, there are still more and more to be brought in, I will gather others to him besides these; these are but the first-fruits, in comparison with the harvest that shall be gathered for Christ in the nations of the earth, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. Note, The church is a growing body, when some are gathered to it, yet still we may hope there shall be more, till the mystical body be completed: *other sheep I have.*

9. ¶ All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, *yea*, all ye beasts in the forest. 10. His watchmen are blind: they *are* all ignorant, they *are* 'all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. 11. Yea, *they are* greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they *are* shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. 12. Come ye, *say they*, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, *and* much more abundant.

From words of comfort the prophet here, by a very sudden change of his stile, passeth to words of reproof and conviction, and goes on in that strain for the most part in the three following chapters; and therefore some here begin a new sermon. He had assured the people, that in due time God would deliver them out of captivity, which was designed for the comfort of those that should live when God would do this: now, here he shews what their sins and provocations were, for which God would send them into captivity, and this was designed for the conviction of those that lived in his own time, near an hundred years before the captivity, who were now filling up the measures of the nation's sin, and to justify God in what he brought upon them. God will lay them waste by the fierceness of their enemies, for the fallenness of their friends.

1. Defolating judgments are here summoned, *ver.* 9. The sheep of God's pasture are now to be made the sheep of his slaughter, to fall as victims to his justice; and therefore the beasts of the field and the forest are called to come and devour. They are beasts of prey, and do it from their own ravenous disposition, but God permits them to do it, nay he employs them as his servants in doing it, the ministers of his justice, though they mean not so, neither do they think so. If this refers primarily to the descent made upon them by their Babylonians, and their devouring of them, yet it

may look farther to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, after these outcasts of them, mentioned ver. 8. were gathered in to the Christian church. The Roman armies came upon them as beasts of the forest to devour them, and they quite took away their place and nation. Note, when God has bloody work to do, he has beasts of prey within call, to be employed in doing it.

2. The reason of these judgments is here given. The shepherds that should have been the watchmen of the flock, to discover the approaches of the beasts of prey, to keep them off, and protect the sheep, were treacherous and careless, minded not their business, nor made any conscience of the trust reposed in them, and so they became an easy prey to the wild beasts. Now this may refer to the false prophets that lived in Isaiah's, Jeremiah's, and Ezekiel's time, that flattered the people in their wicked ways, and told them they should have peace though they went on; and to the priests that bear rule by their means; or to the wicked princes, the sons of Josiah, that *did evil in the sight of the Lord*, and other wicked magistrates under them; they betrayed their trust, were vicious and profane; and instead of making the breach at which the judgments of God were breaking in upon them, it wider, and augmented the fierce anger of the Lord instead of any thing to turn it away. They should have kept judgment and justice, Jer. 1. but they abandoned both, Jer. v. 1. Or it may refer to those were the nation's watchmen in our Saviour's time, the chief priests and scribes, who should have discerned the signs of the times, and have notice to the people of the approach of the Messiah; but instead they opposed him, and did all they could to keep people from coming to the knowledge of him, and to prejudice them against him, which was a very sad character of these given of these watchmen: *Woe unto thee, O land, when thy guides be such.*

They had no sense or knowledge of their business; they were wretchedly ignorant of their work, and very unfit to teach others who were so ill taught themselves. His watchmen are *blind*, and therefore utterly unfit to be watchmen. If the seers see not, who shall see for us? *If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is the darkness!* Christ describes the Pharisees to be *blind leaders of the blind*, Matt. xv. 14. The beasts of the field come to devour, and the watchmen are blind, and are not aware of them. They are *all ignorant*, ver. 10. *shepherds that cannot understand*, ver. 11. that know not what is to be done about the sheep, nor can feed them with understanding, Jer. iii. 15.

2. What little knowledge they had, they made no use of it; nobody was the better for it. As they were *blind watchmen* that could not discern the danger, so they were *dumb dogs* that could not give warning of it. And why are the dogs set to guard the sheep, if they cannot bark to waken the shepherd, and frighten the wolf? Such were these, they that had the charge of souls never reprov'd men for their faults, nor told them what would be in the end thereof; never gave them notice of the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them; they barked at God's prophets, and bit them too, and worried the sheep, but made no opposition to the wolf or thief.

3. They were very lazy and would take no pains, they loved their ease and hated business, were always sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber. They were not overcome and overpowered by sleep, as the disciples, through grief and fatigue, but they lay down on purpose to invite sleep; and said, *Soul, take thine ease. Yet a little sleep.* It is bad with a people when their shepherds slumber, *Neh. iii. 18.* And well for God's people, for their shepherd, the Keeper of Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps.

4. They were very covetous and eager after the world, *greedy dogs that can never have enough*; if they had never so much they would think it too little; they so love silver as never to be satisfied with silver, *Ecclesj. v. 10.* All their enquiry is what they shall get, not what they shall do. Let them have the wages, and they care not whether the work be done or no; they feed not the flock, nor fleece it. They are every one looking to his own way, minding his own private interests, and have no regard at all to the public welfare; it was St. Paul's compliment to the watchmen in his time, *Phil. ii. 21.* *All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's.* Every one is for propagating his own opinion, advancing his own party, raising his own family, and having every thing to his own mind; while the common concerns of the public are wretchedly neglected and postponed. They look every one to his gain from his quarter, from his end or part of the work, they are for gain from every quarter, *rem, rem, quocunque modo rem*, but especially from their own quarter, where they will be sure to take care that they lose nothing, nor miss any thing that is to be got. He that putteth not into their mouths, they not only will do him no service, but they *prepare war against him*, Micah iii. 5.

5. They were perfect Epicures, given to their pleasures, never so much in their element as in their drunken revels, ver. 12. *Come ye* (saith he) *we will fetch wine, they have that at command; their cellars are better furnished than their closets, and we will fill ourselves, or be drunk with strong drink.* They were often drunk, not overseen (as we say) or overtaken in drink, but designedly. The watchman did thus invite and encourage one another to drink to excess, or they courted the people to sit and drink with them, and so confirmed them in their wicked ways, and hardened their hearts, whom they should have reprov'd. How could they think it any harm to be drunk, when the watchmen themselves joined with them, and led them to it?

6. They were mighty secure and confident of the continuance of their prosperity and ease: they said, To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant: we shall have as much to spend upon our lusts to-morrow as we have to day. They had no thought at all of their own frailty and mortality, though they were shortening their days, and hastening their deaths by their excesses. They had no dread of the judgments of God, though they were daily provoking him, and making themselves liable to his wrath and cause. They never considered the uncertainty of all the delights and enjoyments of sense, how they perish in the using, and pass away with the lusts of them. They resolved to continue in this wicked course, whatever their consciences said to the contrary, to be as merry to-morrow as they are to day. *But boast not thyself of to-morrow, when perhaps this night thy soul shall be required of thee.*

C H A P. LVII.

The prophet in this chapter makes his observations, (1.) Upon the deaths of good men, comforting them that were taken away in their integrity, and reproving those that did not make a due improvement of such providences, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Upon the gross idolatries and spiritual whoredoms which the Jews were guilty of, and the destroying judgments they were thereby bringing up themselves, ver. 3—12. (3.) Upon the gracious returns of God to his people to put an end to their captivity, and re-establish their prosperity, ver. 13—21.

1. **T**HE righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it
to heart: and merciful men are taken away,
none considering that the righteous is taken away from
the

the evil to come. 2. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one walking in his uprightness.*

The prophet in the close of the foregoing chapter had condemned the watchmen for their ignorance and sottishness, here he shews the general stupidity and senselessness of the people likewise; no wonder they were inconsiderate, when their watchmen were so, that should have awakened them to consideration. We may observe here,

1. The providence of God removing good men apace out of this world. The righteous as to this world perish, they are gone and their place knows them no more; piety exempts none from the arrests of death, nay, in persecuting times the most righteous are most exposed to the violences of bloody men. The first that died, died a martyr. Righteousness delivereth from the sting of death, but not from the stroke of it. They are said to *perish*, because they are utterly removed from us, and to express the great loss which this world sustains by the removal of them? not that their death is their undoing, but it often proves an undoing to the places where they lived and were useful. Nay, even merciful men are taken away, by the good men that are distinguished from the righteous for whom *some would even dare to die*, Rom. v. 7. Oftentimes those that are removed that could be worst spared; the fruitful trees are cut down by death, and the barren left still to cumber the ground. Merciful men are often taken away, those hand of men's malice, many good works they have done, and for some of them they are stoned. Before the captivity in Babylon perhaps there was a more than ordinary mortality of good men, so that there were scarce any left, Jer. v. 1. The godly ceased, and the faithful failed, Psal. xii. 1.

2. The careless world slighting these providences, and disregarding them; no man lays it to heart, none considers it. There are few that lament it as a public loss, very few that take notice of it as a public warning. The death of good men is a thing to be laid to heart, and considered more than common deaths. Serious enquiries ought to be made, wherefore God contends with us; what good lessons are to be learnt by such providence? What we may do to help to make up a breach, and to fill up the room of those that are removed? God is justly displeased when such events are not laid to heart: when the voice of the rod is not heard, nor the intentions of it answered, much more when it is rejoiced in, as the slaying of the witnesses is, Rev. xi. 10. Some of God's choicest blessings to mankind, being thus easily parted with, are really undervalued; and it is an evidence of very great incogitancy; little children, when they are little, least lament the death of their parents, because they know not what a loss it is to them.

3. The happiness of the righteous in their removal.

1. They are taken away from the evil to come, and when it is just coming, (1.) In compassion to them that they may not see the evil, 2 Kings xxii. 20. nor share in it, nor be in temptation by it. When the deluge is coming they are called into the ark, and have a hiding-place and rest in heaven, where there was none for them under heaven. (2.) In wrath to the world, to punish them for all the injuries they have done to the righteous and merciful ones; those are taken away that stood in the gap to turn away the judgments of God; and then what can be expected but a deluge of them? It is a sign God intends war when he calls home his ambassadors.

2. They go to be easy, out of the reach of that evil. The righteous man, that while he lived walked in his uprightness, when he dies enters into peace, and rests in his bed. Note, 1. Death is gain, and rest, and bliss to those only that walked in their uprightness, and that when they die, can appeal to God concerning it, as Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 3. Now, Lord remember it. 2. They that practised uprightness, and persevered in it to the end shall find it well with them when they die. Their souls then enter into peace, into the world of peace, where peace is in perfection, and where there is no trouble: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Their bodies rest in their beds. Note, The grave is a bed of rest to all the Lord's people; there they rest from all their labours, Rev. xiv. 13. And the more weary they were the more welcome will that rest be to them, Job iii. 17. This bed is made in the darkness, but that makes it the more quiet; it is a bed out of which they shall rise refreshed in the morning of the resurrection.

3. ¶ But draw nigh hither, ye sons of the forcerers, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. 4. Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood. 5. Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks? 6. Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion; they, they are thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered a meat-offering. Should I receive comfort in these? 7. Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice. 8. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered thyself to another then me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them: thou lovest their bed where thou sawest it. 9. And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell. 10. Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thy hand; therefore thou wast not grieved. 11. And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not? 12. I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

We have here a high charge, but a just one, no doubt, drawn up against that wicked generation, out of which God's righteous ones were removed because the world was not worthy of them. Observe,

1. The general character here given of them, or the name and title by which they stand indicted, ver. 2. They are bid to draw near and hear

the charge, are set to the bar and arraigned there as sons of the forcerers, or of a witch, the seed of an adulterer and a whore, i. e. they were such themselves, they were strongly inclined to be such, and their ancestors were such before them. Sin is forcery and adultery, for it is departing from God, and dealing with the devil, and they were children of disobedience. Come, saith the prophet, draw near hither, and I will read your doom; to the righteous death will bring peace and rest, but not to you; you are children of transgression, and a seed of falsehood, ver. 4. that have it by kind, and have it woven into your very nature, to backslide from God, and to deal treacherously with him, Isa. xlviii. 8.

2. The particular crimes laid to their charge.

1. Scoffing at God and his word. They were a generation of scornors, ver. 4. Against whom do you sport yourselves? you think it is only against the poor prophets, whom you trample upon as contemptible men, but really it is against God himself, who sends them, and whose message they deliver. Mocking the messengers of the Lord, is a measure-filling sin, for what was done to them God took himself. When they were re-proved for their sins, and threatened with the judgments of God, they ridiculed the word of God with all contemptuous gestures and expressions of disdain that could be. They despised the laws of good breeding, and were merry with that which should have been serious, and under which they should have humbled themselves. They made wry mouths at the prophets, and drew out the tongue at the laws of good breeding; nor did they treat God's prophets with common civility with which they would have treated a gentleman, but as a servant that had been sent to them of an errand. Note, Those who mock at God, and bid defiance to his judgments, had best consider who it is towards whom they carry it so intemperately.

2. Idolatry. This was that sin which the people of the Jews were most notoriously guilty of before the captivity, but that affliction cured them of it. In Isaiah's time it abounded, witness the abominable idolatries of Ahaz (which some think are particularly referred to here) and of Manasseh. (1.) They were doling fond of their idols, were inflamed with them, as those that burn in unlawful, unnatural lusts, Rom. i. 27. They were mad upon their idols, Jer. i. 38. They inflamed themselves with them by their violent passions in the worship of them, as those of Baal's prophets that leaped upon the altar and cut themselves, 1 Kings xviii. 26—28. Note, Vile corruptions the more they are gratified, the more they are inflamed. They worshipped their idols under every green tree, in the open air, and in the shade, yet that did not cool the heat of their impetuosity, but rather the charming beauty of the green trees made them the more fond of their idols, which they worshipped there. Thus the more pleasing the idols are, the more drawing them to the God of nature, and from him. Their zeal in the worship of false gods, may shame us for our indifferency in the worship of the true God. They loved themselves, but we distract and deaden ourselves. (2.) They were cruel and unnaturally cruel in the worship of their idols. They sacrificed their children, and offered them in sacrifice to their idols, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, the head quarters of that monstrous idolatry, but in other valleys in imitation of that, and under the cliffs of the rocks, in dark and solitary places, the fittest for such works of darkness. (3.) They were abundant and insatiable in their idolatries; they never thought they could have idols enough, nor could spend enough upon them, and do enough in their service. The Syrians had once a notion of the God of Israel, that he was a God of the hills, but not a God of the valleys, 1 Kings xx. 28. but these idolaters to make sure work had both.

(1.) They had gods of the valleys, which they worshipped in the low places by the water side, ver. 6. Among the smooth stones of the valley, or brook, is thy portion. If they saw a smooth carved stone, though set up but for a way-mark, or a mere stone, they were ready to worship it, as the papists do crosses. Or in stony valleys they set up their gods, which they called their portion, and took for their lot, as God's people take him for their lot and portion. But these gods of stone would really be no better a portion for them, no better a lot than the smooth stones of the stream, near which stream they were set up, for sometimes they worshipped their rivers. They, they are the lot which thou trustest to, and art pleased with, but thou shalt be put off with it for thy lot, and miserable will thy case be. See the folly of sinners, who take the smooth stones of the stream for their portion, when they might have the precious stones of God's Jerusalem, and the high-priest's ephod to portion themselves with. Having taken these idols for their lot and portion, they stick at no charge in doing honour to them; to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, and offered a meat-offering, as if they had given thee thy meat and drink; they loved their idols better than their children, for their own tables must be robbed to replenish the altars of their idols. Have we taken the true God for our portion? Is he, even our lot? let us then serve him with our meat and drink, not as they did, by depriving ourselves of the use of it, but by eating and drinking to his glory. Here in a parenthesis comes in a just expression of God's just resentment of this wickedness of theirs. Should I receive comfort in these? in such a people as this? Can they expect that God would take any pleasure in them, or accept their devotions at his altar, who thus serve Baal with the gifts of his providence? God takes comfort in his people, while they are faithful to him, but what comfort can he take in them when they that should be his witnesses against the idolatries of the world do themselves fall in with them? Should I have compassion on these? so some? or should I repent me concerning these? so others; how can they expect that I should spare them, and either adjourn or abate their punishment, when they are so very provoking? Shall I not visit for these things? Jer. iv. 7—9.

(2.) They had gods of the hills too, ver. 7. Upon a lofty and high mountain (as if thou wouldst vie with the high and lofty One himself, ver. 15.) hast thou set thy bed, thine idol, thine idol's temple and altar, the bed of thine uncleanness, where thou committest spiritual whoredom, with all the wantonness of an idolatrous fancy, and in direct violation of the covenant of thy God. Thither wentest thou up readily enough, though it was up hill, to offer sacrifices. Some think this speaks the impudence they arrived to in their idolatries; at first they had some sense of shame, when they worshipped their idols in the valleys, in obscure places; but they soon conquered that, and came to do it upon the lofty mountains they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.

(3.) As if these were not enough, they had household gods too (their *larses* and *penates*), ver. 8. Behind the doors and the posts, where the law of God should be written for a memorandum to them of their duty, there they set up the remembrance of their idols, not so much to keep up their own remembrance of them, they were so fond of them they could not forget them; but to shew to others how mindful they were of them, and to put their children in mind of them, and possess them belimes with a veneration for those dunghill deities.

(4.) As they were insatiable in their idolatries, so they were inseparable from them; they were hardened in their wickedness, they worshipped their idols openly and in public view, as being neither ashamed of the sin nor afraid of the punishment; they went as publicly and in as great crowds to the

devoted to his interest. (5.) That they join themselves to him as friends to his honour and the interests of his kingdom in the world, to love the name of the Lord, to be well-pleased with all the discoveries he hath made of himself, and all the memorials they make of him. Observe, Serving him and loving him go together, for those that love him truly, will serve him faithfully, and that obedience is most acceptable to him which flows from a principle of love, as well as most pleasant to us, for then his commandments are not grievous, 1 John v. 5. (6.) That they keep the Sabbath from polluting it, for the stranger that is within thy gates shall be required to do that. (7.) That they take hold of the covenant, and come under the bonds of it, and put in for the benefits.

(2.) To what privileges they shall be brought. Three things are here promised them in their coming. (1.) That they shall be brought to my holy mountain, not only to Jerusalem, but to the temple, as David himself prays, that God by his holy hill, Psalm xlii. 4. And that they shall have the same conduct. The church is brought to Zion's king, as well as acceptance; their burnt-offering on mine altar, and he needeth no sacrifices of devils. Observe, the pious Jews, and no doubt they are Gentiles by birth, they are the living seed of Jacob, for a Carmel Jew is under the law, (33.) then to us that have a house of prayer, they serve him cheerfully, and are acceptable to him. (34.) Then they shall be brought to my holy mountain, and with them shall they come, for they shall be brought to my God, and their spirit shall be made alive.

(3.) What shall come to the Gentiles. (1.) That they shall be bid welcome, and be brought open to them. (2.) That they shall be brought to the temple. The temple was the house of prayer, and the gospel church, Heb. ix. 8, 9. For the temple was a house of sacrifice, but a house of prayer. (3.) That they shall be brought to the house of God's people shall be meetings for prayer, in which they shall be gathered together, as a token of their united faith and mutual love. (4.) That it shall be a house of prayer, not for the people of the Jews only, but for all people. This was fulfilled when Peter was made, not only to persons in himself, but to all the world, that in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him, Acts x. 35. It had been received as an argument, that the Gentiles that comes shall be put to death, but Gentiles shall now be looked upon no longer as strangers and foreigners, Eph. ii. 19. And it appears by Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, both that it was primarily intended for a house of prayer, and that strangers should be welcome to it, 1 Kings viii. 30—31.

And it is intimated here, ver. 8, that when the Gentiles are called in they shall be incorporated into one body with the Jews, that as Christ hath John x. 16. There may be one fold and one shepherd; for, (1.) God will gather the outcasts of Israel; many of the Jews that had by their unbelief cast themselves out, shall by faith be brought in again a remnant according to the election of grace, Rom. xi. 5. Christ came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matt. x. 6. To gather the outcasts, Psalm cxviii. 2. and to bring them in, Luke ii. 32. (2.) He will gather others also to him, besides his own outcasts that are gathered to him; or though some of the Gentiles have come over easy and then into the church that shall not serve (as some may think) to answer the extent of these promises; no, there are still more and more to be brought in, I will gather others to him besides thee; there are but the first-fruits, in comparison with the harvest that shall be gathered for Christ in the nations of the earth, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. Note, The church is a growing body, when some are gathered to it, yet still we may hope there shall be more, till the mystical body be completed: other sheep I have.

9. ¶ All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. 10. His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. 11. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. 12. Come ye, join them, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

From words of comfort the prophet here, by a very sudden change of his style, or rather to words of reproof and conviction, and goes on in that strain for the most part in the three following chapters; and therefore some have begun a new sermon. He had assured the people, that in due time God would deliver them out of captivity, which was designed for the comfort of those that should live when God would do this: now, here he shews what their sins and provocations were, for which God would send them into captivity, and this was designed for the conviction of those that lived in his own time, near an hundred years before the captivity, who were now filling up the measures of the nation's sin, and to justify God in what he brought upon them. God will lay them waste by the fierceness of their enemies, for the fallacies of their friends.

1. Desolating judgments are here summoned, ver. 9. The sheep of God's pasture are now to be made the sheep of his slaughter, to fall as victims to his justice, and therefore the beasts of the field and the forest are called to come and devour. They are beasts of prey, and do it from their own ravenous disposition, but God permits them to do it, may he employ them as his servants in doing it, the ministers of his justice, though they mean not so, neither do they think so. If this refers primarily to the descent made upon them by their Babylonians, and their devouring of them, yet it

may look farther to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, after these outcasts of them, mentioned ver. 8, were gathered in to the Christian church. The Roman armies came upon them as beasts of the forest to devour them, and they quite took away their place and nation. Note, when God has bloody work to do, he has beasts of prey within call, to be employed in doing it.

2. The reason of these judgments is here given. The shepherds that should have been the watchmen of the flock, to discover the approaches of the beasts of prey, to keep them off, and protect the sheep, were treacherous and careless, minded not their business, nor making any conscience of the trust reposed in them, and so they became an easy prey to the wild beasts. Now this may refer to the false prophets that lived in Isaiah's, Jeremiah's, and Ezekiel's time, that flattered the people in their wicked ways, and told them they should have peace though they went on; and to the priests that bear rule by their means; or to the wicked princes, the sons of Josiah, that did evil in the sight of the Lord, and other wicked magistrates under them, that betrayed their trust, were vicious and profane; and instead of making the breach at which the judgments of God were breaking in upon them, they made it wider, and augmented the fierce anger of the Lord instead of any thing to turn it away. They should have kept judgment and justice, Jer. i. 17. but they abandoned both, Jer. v. 1. Or it may refer to those that were the nation's watchmen in our Saviour's time, the chief priests and scribes, who should have discerned the signs of the times, and have given notice to the people of the approach of the Messiah, but instead of opposing him, and doing all they could to keep people from coming to the knowledge of him, and to prejudice them against him, they were a very bad character, as here given of these watchmen: *Woe unto her, O land, when thy guides are such.*

1. They had no sense or knowledge of their business; they were wretchedly ignorant of their work, and very unfit to teach others who were so ill taught themselves. His watchmen are blind, and therefore utterly unfit to be watchmen. If the seers see not, who shall see for us? If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is the darkness! Christ describes the Pharisees to be blind leaders of the blind, Matt. xv. 14. The beasts of the field come to devour, and the watchmen are blind, and are not aware of them. They are all ignorant, ver. 10, shepherds that cannot understand, ver. 11, that know not what is to be done about the sheep, nor can feed them with understanding, Jer. iii. 15.

2. What little knowledge they had, they made no use of it, nobody was the better for it. As they were blind watchmen that could not discern the danger, so they were dumb dogs that could not give warning of it. And why are the dogs set to guard the sheep, if they cannot bark to waken the shepherd, and frighten the wolf? Such were these, they that had the charge of souls never reproved men for their faults, nor told them what would be in the end thereof; never gave them notice of the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them; they barked at God's prophets, and bit them too, and worried the sheep, but made no opposition to the wolf or thief.

3. They were very lazy and would take no pains, they loved their ease and hated business, were always sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber. They were not overcome and overpowered by sleep, as the disciples, through grief and fatigue, but they lay down on purpose to invite sleep; and said, *Soul, take them easy. Yet a little sleep.* It is bad with a people when their shepherds slumber, Neh. iii. 12. And woe for God's people, for their shepherd, the Keeper of Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps.

4. They were very covetous and eager after the world, greedy dogs that can never have enough; if they had never so much they would think it too little; they so love silver as never to be satisfied with silver, Ecclesi. v. 10. All their enquiry is what they shall get, not what they shall do. Let them have the wages, and they care not whether the work be done or no; they feed not the flock, nor fleece it. They are every one looking to his own way, minding his own private interests, and have no regard at all to the public welfare; it was St. Paul's compliment to the watchmen in his time, *Phil. ii. 21. All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's.* Every one is for propagating his own opinion, advancing his own party, raising his own family, and having every thing to his own mind; while the common concerns of the public are wretchedly neglected and postponed. They look every one to his gain from his quarter, from his end or part of the work, they are for gain from every quarter, *rem, nam, quocunque modo rem,* but especially from their own quarter, where they will be sure to take care that they lose nothing, nor miss any thing that is to be got. He that putteth not into their mouths, they not only will do him no service, but they prepare war against him, Micah iii. 5.

5. They were perfect Epicures, given to their pleasures, never so much in their element as in their drunken revels, ver. 12. *Come ye (saith he) let us feast to-day, for to-morrow we shall die.* They were more in their cellars than their cottages, and we will fill ourselves, or be drunk with strong drink. They were often drunk, not overdrunk (as we say) or overtaken in drink, but designedly. The watchman did thus invite and encourage one another to drink to excess, or they courted the people to sit and drink with them, and so confirmed them in their wicked ways, and hardened their hearts, whom they should have reformed. How could they think it any harm to be drunk, when the watchmen themselves joined with them, and led them to it?

6. They were mighty secure and confident of the continuance of their prosperity and ease: they said, To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant: we shall have as much to spend upon our lusts to-morrow as we have to-day. They had no thought at all of their own frailty and mortality, though they were shortening their days, and hastening their deaths by their excesses. They had no dread of the judgments of God, though they were daily provoking him, and making themselves liable to his wrath and curse. They never considered the uncertainty of all the delights and enjoyments of sense, how they perish in the using, and pass away with the lusts of them. They resolved to continue in this wicked course, whatever their consciences said to the contrary, to be as merry to-morrow as they are to-day. *But boast not thyself of to-morrow, when perhaps this night thy soul shall be required of thee.*

C H A P. LVII.

The prophet in this chapter makes his observations, (1.) Upon the deaths of good men, comforting them that were taken away in their integrity, and reproving those that did not make a due improvement of such providences, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Upon the gross idolatries and spiritual whoredoms which the Jews were guilty of, and the destroying judgments they were thereby bringing upon themselves, ver. 3—12. (3.) Upon the gracious returns of God to his people to put an end to their captivity, and re-establish their prosperity, ver. 13—21.

1. THE righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the

the evil to *come*. 2. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one* walking in his uprightness.

The prophet in the close of the foregoing chapter had condemned the watchmen for their ignorance and torpidity, here he flows the general stupidity and selfishness of the people likewise; no wonder they were inconsiderate, when their watchmen were so, that should have awakened them to consideration. We may observe here,

1. The providence of God removing good men apace out of this world. The righteous as to this world perish, they are gone and their place knows them no more; piety exempts not from the attacks of death, nay, in persecuting times the most righteous are most exposed to the violences of bloody men. The first that died, died a martyr. Righteousness delivereth from the sting of death, but not from the stroke of it. They are said to *perish*, because they are utterly removed from us, and to express the great loss which this world sustains by the removal of them? not that their death is their undoing, but it often proves an undoing to the places where they lived and were useful. Nay, even merciful men are taken away, by the good men that are distinguished from the righteous for whom *time would even dare to die*, Rom. v. 7. Oftentimes those that are removed that could be worth spared; the fruitful trees are cut down by death, and the barren left still to cumber the ground. Merciful men are often taken away, those hand of men's make, many good works they have done, and for some of them they are missed. Before the captivity in Babylon perhaps there was a more than ordinary mortality of good men, so that there were scarce any left, *Jer.* v. 1. The godly ceased, and the faithful failed, *Psal.* xii. 1.

2. The careless world, fighting these providences, and disregarding them; no man lays it to heart, none considers it. There are few that lament it as a public loss, very few that take notice of it as a public warning. The death of good men is a thing to be laid to heart, and considered more than common deaths. Serious enquiries ought to be made, when so a good man ends with us; what good lessons are to be learnt by such providence? What we may do to help to make up a breach, and to fill up the room of those that are removed? God is justly displeased when such events are not laid to heart: when the voice of the rod is not heard, nor the intentions of it answered, much more when it is repented in, as the flaying of the witnesses is, *Rev. xi. 10*. Some of God's choicest blessings to mankind, being thus easily parted with, are really undervalued: as but is an evidence of very great ingratitude; little children, when they are lost, least lament the death of their parents, because they know not what a loss it is to them.

1. They are taken away from the evil to come, and when it is just coming; (1.) In competition to them that they may not *be the evil*; (2 Kings xxi. 20.) nor share in it, nor be in temptation by it. When the deluge is coming they are called in to the ark, and have a hiding-place and rest in heaven, where there was none for them under heaven. (2.) In wrath to the world, to punish them for all the injuries they have done to the righteous and merciful ones; those are taken away that flood in the gap to turn away the judgments of God; and then what can be expected but a deluge of them? It is a sign God intends war when he calls home his ambassadors.

2. They go to be laid, out of the reach of that evil. The righteous man, that while he lived, walked in his uprightness, when he dies, enters into peace, and rests in his bed. Note, 1. Death is gain, and rest, and bliss to those only that walked in their uprightness, and that when they die, can appeal to God concerning it, as Hezekiah, *2 Kings* xix. 35. *Now, Lord remember it.* 2. They that practised uprightness, and persevered in it to the end shall find it well with them when they die. Their souls then enter into peace, into the world of peace, where peace is in perfection, and where there is no trouble: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Their bodies rest in their beds. Note, The grave is a bed of rest to all the Lord's people; there they rest from all their labours, *Rev.* xiv. 13. And the more weary they were the more welcome will that rest be to them, *Job* iii. 17. This bed is made in the darkness, but that makes it the more quiet, it is a bed cut out of which they shall rise refreshed in the morning of the resurrection.

3. ¶ But draw nigh hither, ye sons of the forerets,
the seed of the adulterer and the whore. 4. Against
whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye
a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not
children of transgression, a seed of falsehood. 5. En-
flaming yourselves with idols under every green tree,
slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the
rocks? 6. Among the smooth *stones* of the stream is
thy portion; they, they *are* thy lot: even to them hast
thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered a meat-
offering. Should I receive comfort in these? 7. Upon
a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even
thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice. 8. Behind
the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy re-
membrance: for thou hast discovered *thyself* to another
than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed,
and made thee a *covenant* with them: thou lovest their
bed where thou sawest *it*. 9. And thou wentest to the
king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes,
and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debate
thyself even unto hell. 10. Thou art wearied in the
greatness of thy way; *yet* saidst thou not, There is no
hope: thou hast found the life of thy hand; therefore
thou wast not grieved. 11. And of whom hast thou
been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not
remembered me, nor laid *it* to thy heart? have not I
held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?
12. I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works;
for they shall not profit thee.

We have here a high charge, but a just one, no doubt, drawn up against that wicked generation, out of which God's righteous ones were removed because the world was not worthy of them. Observe,

1. The general character here given of them, or the name and title by which they stand indicated, ver. 2. They are bid to draw near and hear

the charge, as if to the bar and witness of their own guilt, of a man or of a witch, the least of them, and that, when they were asked, themselves, the same question, they were silent, and no others were such before them. Since delivery of him, they, for a while, were good, and dealing with us civilly, and they were called to do us friendly service, for the property, draw near him, and I will send you out of the righteous, with willing pleasure, but not the yearning for the children of the law, and the people of the law, but the yearning for the law, and have it away, not yet, my name, and I will defend it, and not at treacherously with him, *Int. 8. 1. 1.*

2. The particular crimes of Israel to which I allude, are,

1. Mocking at God and his word. They were a generation of scornful men. *Trampling upon his oracles*; you said, it is only against the poor people's, when you trampled upon his commands; men, but really it is against God himself, who lends them, and while making them his people, Mocking the messenger of the Lord, and trampling upon his word, for what was done to them God took, and God punished. When they were proved for their sins, and if beaten down to the judgments of God, they reviled the word of God with disdain, and did not get up and respond as of old that could be. They spoke in defiance and made themselves merry with that which should have been most serious, and when they thought they should have been tried, they made way for the coming of the prophets, and drew out the torments, and made all the law of God a laughing; nor did they treat God's promises with the same respect, in which they would have treated a gentleman's servant, if he had been guilty of them of an errand. No, Those who speak at God, and mock at his judgments, had best consider who they are towards him, and they will be silent.

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(2.) They had gods of the hills: *v.* 7, *I upon a high and lofty mountain* (as thou wouldst vie with the high and lofty One himself, *v.* 15,) *but thou sitst the bed, thine idol, thine idol's temple and altar, the bed of thine uncleanness,* where thou committedst spiritual whoredom, with all the wantonness of an idolatrous fancy, and in direct violation of the covenant of thy God. Thither wentest thou upon a high enough, though it was up hill, to offer sacrifices. — *v.* 8 our mind describes the rapidness they arrived to in their idolatry: at first they had some sense of shame, when they worshipped their idols in the valleys, in hidden places; but they soon conquered that, and came to do it upon the lofty mountains they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.

(3.) As if there were not enough, they had household gods too (their *bars* and *penches*) for St. Richard the doors and the plates, where the law of God should be written for a memorandum to remind of their duty, there they set up the remembrance of their idols, not to teach to keep up their own remembrance of them, they were so fond of them they could not forget them; but to shew to others how mindless they were of them, and to put their children in mind of them, and pollute them betimes with a veneration for those dung-hill deities.

(4.) As they were idolatrous in their idolatries, so they were intemperate to from them; they were hardened in their wickedness, they worshipped their idols openly and in public view, as being neither ashamed of the sin nor afraid of the punishment; they went as publicly and in as great crowds to

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the idol-temples, as ever they had gone to God's house. This was like an impudent harlot, discovering themselves to another than to God, making profession of other than the true religion. They took a pride in making profelytes to their idolatries, and not only went up themselves to their high places, but enlarged their bed, i. e. their idol-temples, and (as the margin reads the following words) thou hewdest it for thyself larger than their's, than their's from whom thou copiedst it, and tookest the platform of it, as Ahaz of his altar from that which he saw at Damascus, 2 Kings xvi. 10. And being thus involved over head and ears as it were in their idolatries, there is no parting them from them: Ephraim is now joined to idols both in love and league. (1.) In league thou hast made a covenant with them, with the idols, with the idol worshippers, to live and die together. This was a complete renunciation of their covenant with God, and an avowed resolution to persist in their apostasy from him. (2.) In love: Thou lovedst their bed, i. e. the temple of idols, wherever thou sawest it. Justly therefore were they given up to their own heart's lusts.

3. Another sin charged upon them, their trusting in, and seeking to foreign aids and succours, and thus making a communion with the Gentile powers, ver. 9. *Thou wentest up to Assyria, which some understand of the idol they worshipped, particularly the image which signifies a king; thou didst every thing to ingratiate thyself with those idols, didst offer incense and sweet ointments at their altars.* It is meant of the king of Assyria whom Ahaz made his god, and the king of Babylon, whose ambassadors Hezekiah caressed, and the kings of the nations whose idolatrous usages they admitted, and were desirous to learn and imitate; and for that end went and sent to cultivate acquaintance and correspondence with them, that they might be like them, and strengthen themselves by an alliance with them. See here, (1.) That an expence they were at in forming and procuring this grand alliance, they went with ointments and perfumes, either bestowed upon themselves, to beautify their own faces, and so make themselves considerable, and worthy the friendship of the greatest king; or to be presented to those whose favour they were ambitious of, because a man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men. When the first present of rich perfumes was thought too little, thou didst increase them; and thus many seek the ruler's favour, forgetting that after all, every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord. So fond were they of those heathen princes, that they not only went themselves in all their airs to those that were near them, but sent messengers to those that were afar off, chap. xviii. 2. (2.) How much they hereby disparaged themselves, and laid the honour of their country and nation in the dust; thou didst debase thyself even unto hell, and by their idolatries. It is a dishonour to the children of men, that they should be subject to the powers of reason, to worship idols, and that God who is the Creator of their own fancy, and the work of their own hands, should bow down to the stock of a tree: it is much more so, that the children of God, that are blessed with the privilege of seeing and knowing such a God as they know their's to be, for a living of nobility, should be so mercies for lying vanities. They likewise debased themselves by depending on their Heathen neighbours, and depending upon them when they had a God to go to, that is all-sufficient, and in covenant with them. How did they shame themselves to the highest degree, and sink themselves to the lowest, that forsook the fountain of life for broken cisterns, and the rock of ages for broken reeds! Note, Sinners disparage and debase themselves; the service of sin is an ignominious slavery; and they who thus debase themselves to hell, will justly have their portion there.

3. The aggravation of their sin:

1. They had been tried with disappointments in their wicked courses, and yet they would not be convinced of the folly of them, ver. 10. *Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; thou hast undertaken a mighty task, to find out true satisfaction and happiness in that which is vanity and a lie.* Those that set up idols instead of God for the object of their worship, and princes instead of God for the object of their hope and confidence, and thus to better themselves, and make themselves easy, go a great way about, and will never come to their journey's end. Thou art wearied in the multitude or multiplicity of thy ways, so some read it; those that forsake the only right way wander endlessly in a thousand by-paths, and lose themselves in the many inventions which they have fought out; they weary themselves with fresh chaces and fierce ones, but never gain their point: like the Sodomites, that wearied themselves to find the door, Gen. xix. 11. and could not find it at last. The pleasures of sin will soon surfeit, but never satisfy; a man may quickly tire himself in the pursuit of them, but can never repose himself in the enjoyment of them. They found this by experience, the idols they had often worshipped never did them any kindness; the kings they courted distressed them, and helped them not; and yet they were so wretchedly befuddled that they could not say, there is no hope; it is in vain any longer to expect that satisfaction in creature-confidences, and in the worship of idols, which we have so often looked for, and never met with. Note, Despair of happiness in the creature, and of satisfaction in the service of sin, is the first step towards a well-grounded hope of happiness in God, and a well fixed resolution to keep his service. And those are inexcusable who have had sensible conviction of the vanity of the creature, and yet will not be brought to say, There is no hope to be happy short of the Creator.

2. Though they were convinced that the way they were in was a sinful way, yet because they had found some present sensual pleasure and worldly profit by it, they could not persuade themselves to be sorry for it; thou hast found the life of thy hand, or the living of it; thou boastest how fortune smiles upon thee, and therefore thou art not grieved, no more than Ephraim when he said, *Hos. xii. 8. I am become rich, I have found me out substance.* Note, Prosperity in sin is a great bar to conversion from sin. Those that live at ease in their sinful pleasures, and raise estates by their sinful projects, are tempted to think God favours them, and therefore they have nothing to repent of. Some read it ironically, or by way of question. Thou hast found the life of thy hand, hast found true satisfaction and happiness, no doubt, thou hast; hast thou not? and therefore thou art so far from being grieved, that thou blessed thyself in thine own evil way: but review thy gains once more, and come to a balance of profit and loss, and then say, What fruit hadst thou of those things whereof thou art ashamed, and for which God shall bring thee into judgment? Rom. vi. 21.

3. They had dealt very unworthily with God by their sin; for, (1.) It should seem they pretended that the reason why they left God was, because he was too terrible a Majesty for them to deal with, they must have gods that they could be more free and familiar with. But, saith God, of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied; i. e. that thou hast dealt falsely and treacherously with me, and dissembled in thy covenant with me, and prayers to me? What did I ever do to frighten thee from me? What occasion have I given thee to think hardly of me, that thou hast gone to seek a kinder master? (2.) However, it is certain they had no true reverence of God or any awful regard to him. So that question is commonly understood, of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared? of none; for thou hast not feared me whom thou shouldst fear; for thou hast lied to me. Those

that dissemble with God make it to appear they stand in no awe of him. Thou hast not remembered me, neither what I have said, nor what I have done; neither the promises, nor the threatenings, nor the performances of either; thou hast not laid them to thy heart, as thou wouldst have done if thou hadst feared me. Note, Those who lay not the word of God and his providences in their hearts, it is a sign they have not the fear of God before their eyes. And multitudes are ruined by fearlessness, forgetfulness, and mere carelessness; they do not aright, nor to good purpose, fear any thing, remember any thing, nor lay any thing to heart. Nay, (3.) They were hardened in their sin by the patience and forbearance of God; have not I held my peace of old, and for a long time, these things thou hast done, and I kept silence? and therefore, as it follows here, thou fearest me not; as if because God had spared long, he would never punish, *Eccles. viii. 11. Because he kept silence, the sinner thought him altogether such a one as himself, and stood in no awe of him.*

Lastly, Here is God's resolution to call them to an account, though he had long born with them, ver. 12. *I will declare; like that, Psalm l. 21. But I will reprove thee, I will declare thy righteousness,* which thou makest thy boast of, and let the world see, and thyself too, to thy confusion, that it is all a sham, all a cheat, it is not what it pretends to be; when thy righteousness comes to be examined, it will be found unrighteousness; and that there is no sincerity in all thy pretensions. I will declare thy works, what they have been, and what the gain thou pretendest to have gotten by them, and it will appear that at a long run they shall not profit thee, nor turn to any account. Note, Sinful works, as they are works of darkness, and there is no reason or righteousness in them, so they are unfruitful works and there is nothing got by them; and however they look now, it will be made to appear so another day; sin doth not profit, nay it doth ruin and destroy.

13. ¶ When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me, shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; 14. And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people: 15. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. 16. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit shall fail before me, and the souls which I have made.

Here, 1. God shews how sufficient idols and creatures were to relieve and succour those that worshipped them, and confided in them, ver. 13. *When thou criest, in thy distress and anguish, lamentest thy misery, and callest for help, let thy companies deliver thee, thy idol-gods which thou hast heaped to thyself, companies of the troops of the confederate forces which thou hast relied so much upon, let them deliver thee if they can; expect no other relief but what they can give.* Thus God said to Israel, when in their trouble they called upon thee, *Judges x. 14. Go and cry to the gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you.* But in vain is salvation hoped from them, the wind shall carry them all away, the wind of God's wrath, the breath of his mouth which shall slay the wicked; they have made themselves as chaff, and therefore the wind will of course hurry them away; vanity they are, and vanity shall take them away, to vanity they shall be reduced, and vanity shall be their recompence. Both the idols and their worshippers shall come to nothing.

2. He shows that there was a sufficiency, an all-sufficiency in him, for the comfort and deliverance of all those that put their confidence in him, and made their application to him: and their safety and satisfaction appears the more comfortable because their hopes are crowned with fruition, when those that seek to other helpers have their hopes frustrated: but he that putteth his trust in me, and in me only, he shall be happy, both for soul and body; for this world and the other. (1.) They that trust in God's providence, take the best course to secure their secular interests, they shall possess the land, as much of it as is good for them, and what they have, they shall have it from a good hand, and hold it by a good title, *Psalm xxxvii. 3. They shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed.* (2.) They that trust in God's grace take the best course to secure their sacred interests: they shall inherit my holy mountain. They shall enjoy the privileges of the church on earth, and be brought at length to the joys of heaven; and no wind shall carry them away. More particularly,

1. The captives that trust in God shall be released, ver. 14. *They shall say, i. e. the messengers of his word, and all the ministers of his providence, in that great event shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way.* When God's time is come for their deliverance, the way of bringing it about shall be made plain and easy; obstacles shall be removed, difficulties that seemed insuperable shall presently be got over, and all things shall concur both to accelerate and facilitate their return. See chap. xl. 3, 4. This refers to the provision which the gospel, and the grace of it, hath made for our ready passage through this world to a better. The way of religion is now cast up, it is a highway, ministers' business is to direct people in it, and to help them over the discouragements they meet with, that nothing may offend them.

2. The contrite that trust in God shall be revived, ver. 15. *They that trust to idols and creatures for help, went with their ointments and perfumes, ver. 9. But here God shews that those who may expect help from him, are such as are destitute of, and set themselves at a distance from the gaieties of the world and the delights of sense. God's glory appears here very bright,*

(1.) In his greatness and majesty; he is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. Let this possess us with very high and honourable thoughts of the God with whom we have to do. (1.) That his being and perfections are exalted infinitely above every creature; not only above what they have themselves, but above what they can conceive concerning him, *far above all their blessing and praise, Neh. ix. 5. He is the high and lofty One, and there is no creature like him, nor any to be compared with him.* It speaks likewise his sovereign dominion over all, and the incontestible right he has to give both law and judgment to all: he is *higher than the highest, Eccles. v. 8. than the highest heavens, Psalm cxlii. 4.* (2.) That with him there is neither beginning of days, nor end of life, nor change of time; he is both immortal and immutable, he only *hath immortality, 1 Tim. vi. 16.* He hath it of himself, and he hath it constantly, he inhabits it, and cannot be dispossessed of it. We must shortly remove into eternity, but God

God always inhabits it. (3.) That there is an infinite rectitude in his nature, and an exact conformity with himself, and a steady design for his own glory in all that he doeth; and this appears in every thing by which he has made himself known, for his name is Holy, and all that desire to be acquainted with him must know him as a holy God. (4.) That the peculiar residence and discovery of his glory is in the mansions of light and bliss above: I dwell in the high and holy place, and will have all the world to know it. Whoever have any business with God must direct to him as their Father in heaven, for there he dwells. These great things are here said of God, to possess us with a holy reverence of him, to encourage our confidence in him, and to magnify his compassion and condescension to us; that though he is thus high, yet he hath respect unto the lowly; he that rides on the heavens by his name Jah, stoops to concern himself for poor widows and fatherless, Psalm lxxiii. 4, 5.

(2.) In his grace and mercy; he hath a tender pity for the humble and contrite; for those that are so in respect of their state, if they be his people he will not overlook them though they are low and poor in the world, and despised and trampled upon by men. But it refers to the temper of their mind he will have a tender regard to those that being in affliction accommodate themselves to their affliction, and bring their mind to their condition be it never so low, and never so sad and sorely broken. Those that are truly penitent for sin, and mourn in secret for it, and have a dread of the wrath of God, which they have made themselves obnoxious to, and are submissive under all his rebukes: Now (1.) With these God will dwell, he will visit them graciously, will converse familiarly with them by his word and Spirit, as a man doth with those of his own family; he will be always nigh to them, and present with them; he that dwells in the highest heavens dwells in the lowest hearts, and inhabits sincerity as surely as he inhabits eternity; in these he delights. (2.) He will revive their heart and Spirit, will speak that to them, and work that in them, by the word and Spirit of his grace, which will be reviving to them, as a cordial to one that is ready to faint. He will give them reviving joys and hopes, sufficient to balance all the griefs and fears that break their spirits. He dwells with them, and his presence is reviving.

3. Those he contends with, if they trust in him, shall be relieved and received into favour, ver. 16. He will revive the heart of the contrite ones, for he will not contend for ever. Nothing makes a soul contrite so as God's contending, and therefore nothing revives it so as his ceasing his controversy. Here is, 1. A gracious promise: It is not promised that he will never be angry with his people, for their sins are displeasing to him; or that he will never contend with them, for they must expect the rod; but he will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth. As he is not soon angry, so he is not long angry; he will not always chide. Though he contend with them by conviction of sin, he will not contend for ever, but instead of the spirit of bondage they shall receive the Spirit of adoption; he hath torn, but he will heal: though he contend with them by the rebukes of providence, yet the correction shall not last always, shall not last long, no longer than there is need, 1 Pet. i. 6. no longer than they can bear, and no longer than till it has done its work. Though their whole life be calamitous, yet their end will be peace, and so will their eternity be. 2. A very compassionate consideration, upon which this promise is grounded; if I should contend for ever, the spirit would fail before me, even the souls which I have made. Note, 1. God is the Father of spirits, Heb. xii. 9. it is the soul that he has made; that he gave being to by creation, and a new being to by generation. 2. Though the Lord is for thy body, yet he concerns himself chiefly for the souls of his people, that the spirit do not fail, and its graces and comforts. 3. When troubles last long, the spirit even of good men is apt to fail; they are tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God, to think it in vain to serve him; they are ready to put comfort away from them, and to despair of relief, and then the spirit fails. 4. It is in consideration of this, that God will not contend for ever; for he will not forsake the work of his own hands, nor defeat the purchase of his Son's blood. The reason is taken, not from our merit, but from our weakness and infirmity; for he remembers that we are flesh, Psalm lxxviii. 39. and the flesh is weak.

17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. 18. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. 19. I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him. 20. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 21. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

The body of the people of Israel, in this account of God's dealings with them, is spoken of as a particular person, ver. 17, 18. but divided into two sorts that were differently dealt with; some that were sons of peace, to whom peace is spoken, ver. 19. and others that were not, who have nothing to do with peace, ver. 20, 21. Observe here,

1. The just rebukes which that people were brought under for their sin; "for the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him." Covetousness was a sin that abounded very much among that people, Jer. vi. 13. From the least to the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness. Those that did not worship images, yet were carried away by his spiritual idolatry, for so covetousness is, it is making money their god, Col. iii. 5. No marvel the people were covetous, when their watchmen themselves were notoriously so, chap. lvi. 11. Yet as covetous as they were, in the service of their idols they were prodigal, ver. 6. And it is hard to say, whether their profuseness in that, or their covetousness in every thing else, was more provoking. But for this iniquity among others God was angry with them, and brought down judgment after another upon them, and their destruction at last by the Chaldeans. (1.) God was wroth, he resented it, took it very ill that a people who were devoted to himself, and portioned in himself, should be so entirely given up to the world, and choose that for their portion. Note, Covetousness is an iniquity that is very displeasing to the God of heaven, it is heart-sin, but he sees it, and therefore hates it, and looks upon it with jealousy, because it sets up a rival with him in the soul: It is a sin which men bless themselves in, Psalm xlix. 18. and in which their neighbours bless them, Psalm x. 3. but God abhors it. (2.) He smote him, reproved him for it by his prophets, corrected him by his providence, punished him in those very things he so doted upon, and was covetous of. Note, Sinners shall be made to feel from the anger of God; whom he is wroth with, he smites; and covetousness particularly lays men under the tokens of God's

displeasure: they that set their hearts upon the wealth of this world, either they are disappointed of it, or it is embittered to them; it is either clogged with a cross, or turned into a curse. (3.) God hid himself from him when he was under these rebukes; and continued wroth with him. When we are under the rod, if God manifest himself to us, we may bear it the better; but if he both smite us, and hide himself from us, send us no prophets, speak to us no comfortable word, shew us no token for good, if he *tear and go away*, Hof. v. 14. we are very miserable.

2. Their obstinacy and incorrigibleness under these rebukes; he went on frowardly in the way of his heart, in his evil way. He was not sensible of the displeasure of God that he was under; he felt the smart of the rod, but had no regard at all to the hand; the more he was crossed in his worldly pursuits, the more eager he was in them. He either would not see his error, or if he saw it would not amend it; covetousness was the way of his heart, was what he was inclined to and intent upon, and he would not be reclaimed, but in his distress he trespassed yet more, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. See the strength of the corruption of men's hearts, and the sinfulness of sin; it will take its course in despite of God himself, and all the flames of his wrath. See also how insufficient afflictions of themselves are to reform men, unless God's grace work with them.

3. God's wonderful return in mercy to them, notwithstanding the obstinacy of the generality of them. The greater part of them went on frowardly, but there were some among them that were mourners for the obstinacy of the rest: and with an eye to them, or rather for his own name's sake, God determines not to contend for ever with them. With the froward God may justly shew himself froward, Psalm xviii. 26, and walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, Lev. xxvi. 24. When this sinner here went on frowardly in the way of his heart, one would think it should have followed, I have seen his ways and will destroy him, will abandon him, will never have any thing more to do with him: no, such are the riches of divine mercy and grace, and so do they rejoice against judgment, that it follows, I have seen his ways, and will heal him. See how God's goodness takes occasion from men's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; and where sin hath abounded grace doth much more abound. God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, for in us there appears nothing but what is provoking; I have seen his ways, and yet I will heal him for my own name's sake. God knew how bad the people were, and yet would not cast them off. But observe the method, God will first give him grace, and then, and not till then, give him peace; I have seen his ways, that he will never turn to me of himself, and therefore I will turn him. Those whom God has mercy upon, he has grace in readiness for, to prepare and qualify them for that mercy, which they were as fast as the could running from. (1.) God will heal him of his corrupt and vicious disposition, will cure him of his covetousness, though it be never so deeply rooted in him, and his heart has been long exercised to covetous practices. There is no spiritual disease so inveterate, but almighty grace can conquer it. (2.) God will lead him also; not only amend what was amiss in him, that he may cease to do him evil, but direct him into the way of duty, that he may learn to do well. He goes on frowardly, as Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter, but God will lead him into a better mind, a better path. And then, (3.) He will restore those comforts to him which he hath forfeited and lost, and for the return of which he had thus prepared him. There was a wonderful reformation wrought upon the captives in Babylon: and then a wonderful redemption wrought for them; which brought comfort to them, i. e. their mourners; to those among them that mourned for their own sins, and the sins of their people, and the desolations of the sanctuary. To those mourners the mercy would be most comfortable, and to them God had an eye in working it out. Blessed are they that mourn, for to them comfort belongs, and they shall have it.

Now, as when that people went into captivity, some of them were good figs, very good, others of them bad figs, very bad, and accordingly their captivity was to them for their good, or for their hurt, Jer. xxiv. 8, 9. so when they came out of captivity, still some of them were good, others bad, and accordingly the deliverance was to them.

1. To those among them that were good, their return out of captivity was peace, such peace as was a type and earnest of the peace which should be preached by Jesus Christ, ver. 19. I create the fruit of the lips; peace. (1.) God designed to give them matter for praise and thanksgiving, for that is the fruit of the lips, Heb. xiii. 15. the calves of the lips; Hof. xiv. 2. I create this. Creation is out of nothing, and this is surely out of worse than nothing, when God creates matter of praise for those that went on frowardly in the way of their heart. (2.) In order to this, peace shall be published, peace, peace, perfect peace, all kinds of peace, to him that is afar off from the general rendezvous, or from the head-quarters, as well as to him that is near. Peace with God, though he has contended with them he will be reconciled, and let fall his controversy; peace of conscience, a holy security, and serenity of mind, after the many reproaches of conscience and tolls of spirit they had been under in their captivity. Thus God creates the fruit of the lips, fresh matter for thanksgiving: for when he speaks peace to us, we must speak praises to him. This peace is itself of God's creating, he, and he only, can work it; it is the fruit of the lips, of his lips, he commands it, of the minister's lips, he speaks it by them, chap. xl. 1. It is the fruit of preaching lips and praying lips; it is the fruit of Christ's lips, whose lips drop as a honey-comb; for to him that is applied, Eph. ii. 17. He came and preached peace to you who were afar off; you Gentiles as well as the Jews, who were nigh; to after-ages, who were afar off in time, as well as to those of the present age.

To those among them that were wicked, though they might return with the rest, yet to them their return was no peace, ver. 20. The wicked, wherever he is, in Babylon or in Jerusalem, carries about with him the principle of his own uneasiness, and is like the troubled sea. God healed those to whom he spoke peace, ver. 19. I will heal them; all shall be well again and set to rights; but the wicked would not be healed by the grace of God, and therefore shall not be healed by his comforts. They are always like the sea in a storm, for they carry about with them, (1.) Unmortified corruptions; those are not cured and conquered, and their unconverted lusts and passions make them like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, vexatious to all about them, and therefore uneasy to themselves; noisy and dangerous. When the intemperate heats of the spirit break out in scurrilous and abusive language, then the troubled sea casts forth mire and dirt. (2.) Unpacified consciences; they are under a frightful apprehension of guilt and wrath, that they cannot enjoy themselves; when they seem settled, they are in a loss; when they seem merry, they are in heaviness, like Cain, that always dwelt in the land of shaking. The terrors of conscience muddy all their enjoyments, and cast forth such mire and dirt as makes them a burden to themselves. Though this doth not appear (it may be) at present, yet it is a certain truth, what this prophet had said before, chap. xlviii. 22. and here repeats, ver. 21. There is no peace for the wicked, no reconciliation to God, nor can they be upon good terms with him, while they go on still in their trespasses; no quietness or satisfaction in their own mind, no real good, no peace in death, because no hope. My God hath said it, and all the world

the idol-temples, as ever they had gone to God's house. This was like an impudent harlot, discovering themselves to another than to God, making profession of other than the true religion. They took a pride in making profectes to their idolatryes, and not only went up themselves to their high places, but enlarged their bed, *i. e.* their idol-temples, and (as the margin reads the following words) thou howldst it for thyself larger than their's, than their's from whom thou copiedst it, and tookest the platform of it, as Ahaz of his altar from that which he saw at Damascus, 2 Kings xvi. 10. And being thus involved over head and ears as it were in their idolatries, there is no parting them from them: Ephraim is now joined to idols both in love and league. (1.) In league thou hast made a covenant with them, with the idols, with the idol worshippers, to live and die together. This was a complete renunciation of their covenant with God, and an avowed resolution to persist in their apostasy from him. (2.) In love: Thou lovedst their bed, *i. e.* the temple of an idol, wherever thou sawest it. Justly therefore were they given up to their own heart's lusts.

3. Another sin charged upon them, is their trafficking in, and seeking to foreign aids and succours, and contracting a communion with the Gentile powers, *ver. 9. Thou wentest forth to the king of Assyria* which some understand of the idol they worshipped, particularly of Baal, which signifies a king; thou didst every thing to ingratiate thyself with those idols, didst offer incense and sweet offerings at their altars. It may be meant of the king of Assyria whom Ahah made his courtier, or of the king of Babylon, whose ambassadors Hezekiah caressed, for of other the kings of the nations whose idolatrous images they admitted, and were desirous to learn and imitate; and for that end went and lent to cultivate an acquaintance and correspondence with them, that they might be like them, and strengthen themselves by an alliance with them. See here, (1.) What an expence they were at in forming and procuring this grand alliance; they went with ointments and perfumes, either bestowed upon themselves, to beautify their own faces, and to make themselves considerable, and worthy the friendship of the greatest king; or to be presented to those whole favour they were ambitious of, because a man's gut maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men. When the first present of rich perfumes was the right too little, thou didst increase them; and thus many seek the ruler's favour, forgetting that after all, every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord. So fond were they of those heathen princes, that they not only went themselves in all their suits to those that were near them, but sent messengers to those that were afar off, *chap. xvi. 2.* (2.) How much they hereby disparaged themselves, and thus the honour of their crown and nation in the dust; thou didst debate thyself even unto hell, to thyself by their idolatries. It is a dishonour to the children of men, that are endued with the powers of reason, to worship that which is but the work of their own hands, to bow down to the stock of a tree; it is much more dishonour to the children of God, that are blessed with the privilege of divine revelation, to forsake such a God as they know themselves to be, for a thing of nought, their own images for living vanities. They likewise debased themselves by trafficking to meet the heathen neighbours, and depending upon them when they had a God to rely on, that is all-sufficient, and in covenant with them. How did they thus expose themselves to the highest degree, and sink themselves to the lowest, that forsook the fountain of life for broken cisterns, and the rock of ages for broken reeds! Note, Sinners disparage and debate themselves; the service of sin is an ignominious slavery; and they who thus debate themselves to hell, will justly have their portion there.

3. The aggravation of their sin:

1. They had been tried with disappointments in their wicked courses, and yet they would not be convinced of the folly of them, *ver.* 10. *Thou art wearied in the greatness of the way;* thou hast undertaken a mighty task, to find out true satisfaction and happiness in that which is vanity and a lie. Those that set up idols instead of God for the object of their worship, and princes instead of God for the object of their hope and confidence, and thus to better themselves, and make themselves easy, go a great way about, and will never come to their journey's end. *Thou art wearied in the multitude or multiplicity of thy ways,* for some read it; those that forsake the only right way wander endlessly in a thousand by-paths, and lose themselves in the many inventions which they have thought out; they weary themselves with flesh chases and fierce ones, but never gain their point: like the sodomites, that *wearied themselves to find the door,* Gen. xix. 11. and could not find it at last. The pleasures of sin will soon sicken, but never last; a man may quickly tire himself in the pursuit of them, but can never repose himself in the enjoyment of them. They found this by experience, the idols they had often worshipped never did them any kindness; the kings they courted distressed them, and helped them not; and yet they were so wretchedly besotted that they could not say, *there is no hope*; it is in vain any longer to expect that satisfaction in creature-confidences, and in the worship of idols, which we have so often looked for, and never met with. Note, Despair of happiness in the creature, and of satisfaction in the service of sin, is the first step towards a well-grounded hope of happiness in God, and a well fixed resolution to keep his service. And those are miserable who have had sensible conviction of the vanity of the creature, and yet will not be brought to say, *There is no hope to be happy short of the Creator.*

2. Though they were convinced that the way they were in was a sinful way, yet because they had found some present sensual pleasure and worldly profit by it, they could not persuade themselves to be sorry for it; thou hast found the life of thy hand, or the living of it; thou boastest how fortune smiles upon thee, and therefore thou art not grieved, no more than Ephraim when he said, *Hos. xii. 8. I am become rich, I have found me out substance.* Note, Prosperity in sin is a great bar to conversion from sin. Those that live at ease in their sinful pleasures, and raise estates by their sinful projects, are tempted to think God favours them, and therefore they have nothing to repent of. Some read it ironically, or by way of question. Thou hast found the life of thy hand, hast found true satisfaction and happiness, no doubt, thou hast, hast thou not? and therefore thou art so far from being grieved, that thou blessed thyself in thine own evil way: but review thy gains once more, and come to a balance of profit and loss, and then say, What fruit hath thou of those things, whereof thou art ashamed, and for which God hath brought thee into judgment? Rom. vi. 21.

3. They had dealt very unworthily with God by their sin; for, (1.) It would seem they pretended that the reason why they left God was, because he was too terrible a Majesty for them to deal with; they must have gods that they could be more free and familiar with. But, saith God, of whom hast thou been afraid, that thou hast lied; i. e. that thou hast dealt falsely and treacherously with me, and dissembled in thy covenant with me, and prayers to me? What did I ever do to frighten thee from me? What occasion have I given thee to think hardly of me, that thou hast gone to seek a kinder matter? (2.) However, it is certain they had no true reverence of God or any awful regard to him. So that question is commonly understood, of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared? of none; for thou hast not feared me whom thou shouldst fear; for thou hast lied to me. Those

that dissemble with God make it to appear they stand in no awe of him. Thou hast not remembered me, neither what I have said, nor what I have done; neither the promises, nor the threatenings, nor the performances of either; thou hast not laid them to thy heart, as thou wouldst have done if thou hadst feared me. Note, Those who lay not the word of God and his providences in their hearts, it is a sign they have not the fear of God before their eyes. And multitudes are ruined by fearlessness, forgetfulness, and mere carelessness; they do not aright, nor to good purpose, hear any thing, remember any thing, nor lay any thing to heart. Nay, (3.) They were hardened in their sin by the patience and forbearance of God; have not I held my peace of old, and for a long time, these things thou hast done, and I kept silence? and therefore, as it follows here, thou fearest me not; as if because God had spared long, he would never punish, *Ezek. viii. 11.* Because he kept silence, the sinner thought him altogether such a one as himself, and stood in no awe of him.

Lafily, Here is God's resolution to call them to an account, though he had long born with them, ver. 12. *I will declare*: like that, *Ejalm* i. 21. *But I will reprove thee, I will declare thy righteousness*, which thou makest thy boast of, and let the world see, and thyself too, to thy confusion, that it is all a sham, all a cheat, it is not what it pretends to be: when thy righteousness comes to be examined, it will be found unrighteousness; and that there is no sincerity in all thy pretensions. *I will declare thy works*, what they have been, and what the gain thou pretendest to have gotten by them, and it will appear that at a long run they shall not profit thee, nor turn to any account. Note. Sinful works, as they are works of darkness, and there is no reason or righteousness in them, so they are unprofitable work, and there is nothing got by them; and however they look now, it will be made to appear to another day; sin doth not prosper, say it does now at I destroy.

13. ¶ When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take *them*: but he that putteth his trust in me, shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain: 14. And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people: 15. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and *holy place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. 16. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit shall fail before me, and the souls *which* I have made.

Here, 1. God shews how sufficient idols and creatures were to relieve and succour those that worshipped them, and confided in them, *ver. 13.* *When thou criest, in thy distress and anguish, lamented thy misery, and calledst for help, let thy companies deliver thee,* thy idol-gods which thou hast heaped to thyself; companies of the troops of the confederate forces which thou hast relied so much upon, let them deliver thee if they can; expect no other relief but what they can give. Thus God said to Israel, when in their trouble they called upon them, *Judges x. 11.* *Go and cry to the gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you.* But in vain is salvation expected from them, the wind shall carry them all away, the wind of God's wrath, the breath of his mouth which shall lay the wicked; they have made themselves as chaff, and therefore the wind will of course hurry them away; vanity they are, and vanity shall take them away, to vanity they shall be reduced, and vanity shall be their recompence. Both the idols and their worshippers shall come to nothing.

2. He shows that there was a sufficiency, an all-sufficiency in him, for the comfort and deliverance of all those that put their confidence in him, and made their application to him; and their safety and satisfaction appears the more comfortable because their hopes are crowned with fruition, when those that seek to other helpers have their hopes frustrated: but he that putteth his trust in me, and in me only, he shall be happy, both for soul and body, for this world and the other. (1.) They that trust in God's providence, take the best course to secure their secular interests, they shall possess the land, as much of it as is good for them, and what they have, they shall have it from a good hand, and hold it by a good title, *Psalms xxxvii.* 3. *They shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed.* (2.) They that trust in God's grace take the best course to secure their sacred interests: they shall inherit my holy mountain. They shall enjoy the privileges of the church on earth, and be brought at length to the joys of heaven; and no wind shall carry them away. More particularly,

1. The captives that trill in God shall be released, ver. 14. *They shall say*, i. e. the messengers of his word, and all the ministers of his providence, in that great event shall say, *Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way*. When God's time is come for their deliverance, the way of bringing it about shall be made plain and easy; obstacles shall be removed, difficulties that seemed insuperable shall presently be got over, and all things shall concur both to accelerate and facilitate their return. See chap. xl. 3, 4. This refers to the provision which the gospel, and the grace of it, hath made for our ready passage through this world to a better. The way of religion is now cast up, it is a highway, ministers' business is to direct people in it, and to help them over the discouragements they meet with, that nothing may offend them.

2. The contrite that trust in God shall be revived, ver. 15. They that trust to idols and creatures for help, went with their *ointments and perfumes*, ver. 9. But here God shews that those who may expect help from him, are such as are destitute of, and set themselves at a distance from the gaieties of the world and the delights of sense. God's glory appears here very bright,

(1.) In his greatness and majesty; he is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. Let this possess us with very high and honorable thoughts of the God with whom we have to do. (1.) That his being and perfection are exalted infinitely above every creature; not only above what they have seen or felt, but above what they can conceive concerning him, far above all our blessing and prayer, *Isa. lx. 5. He is high and lofty One, and there is none exalted like him, nor any to be compared with him.* It speaks his absolute sovereign dominion over all, and the incomparable right he has to give both law and judgment to all; *Isa. lxxv. 7. He is higher than the highest,* *Eccles. v. 8. than the highest heavens,* *Psalm cxli. 4.* (2.) That with him there is neither beginning of days, nor end of time, nor change of time; he is both immortal and unchangeable, *the only both immortality,* *1 Tim. vi. 16.* He hath it of himself, and he hath it command; he inhabits it, and cannot be the subject of it. We must therefore commend him eternally, but

God

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(2.) It is said that he will have a tender pity for the humble and contrite hearted, who are low in respect of their rank, if they be like people in will and conversation, though they are low and poor in the world, and despised and trampled upon by men. But it refers to the temper of their mind. They will have a tender regard to those that bring in affliction as voluntary affliction, lives to our affliction, and bring the human mind to their condition. He never tires, and never to fade and to be broken. Those that are in affliction secretly, and mourn in secret for it, and have a dread of the world, for fear, which they have made themselves obnoxious to, and are taken to shame and rebukes; Now (1.) With that God will dwell, and will converse familiarly with them by his word, and will be acquainted with those of his own family; he will be glad to converse and converse with them; he that dwells in the highest heavens, and the very heights, and makes himself as freely as he dwells in the earth, and the very heights. (2.) He will revive their heart and spirit, will give them strength to do that which in them, by the word and Spirit of his grace, will give them strength to do, as a cordial to one that is ready to faint. He will do them reviving joys and helps, sufficient to overcome all their griefs and to break their spirits. He dwells with them, and he will revive them.

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17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and made him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. 18. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. 19. I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to *him that is far off*, and to *him that is near*, saith the LORD; and I will heal him. 20. But the wicked *as* Take the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 21. *There is no peace*, saith my God, to the wicked.

There is a "double" in the account of God's dealings with the two sons of Adam, the firstborn, Gen. 17, 18, but divided into two parts, that of the firstborn, with sons that were sons of Isaac, to whom were given the land, Gen. 19, and other, that were not, who have nothing to do with the land, Gen. 22. Observe here,

1. That they had sold their people were brought under to their sin; 2. That they sold their souls for sinners; 3. That they were wroth, and fought in a. 2. So many were sold, that they sold very much among that people, for, ver. 5. *And they sold of them, every one as given to covetousness.* They that did sell, and those that were sold, yet were carried away by his spiritual sickness, for he that is sick, is not making money then go, Ch. iii. 5. So many of the people were sinners, when their watchmen for malice were so faithful to sell them, ver. 6. As covetous as they were. In the service of their sinners, was their sin, ver. 6. And it is hard to say, whether their sin was more than the sin of the sinners in every thing else, was more covetousness. But for their sinners among others God was angry with them, God brought down judgment after another upon them, and did not afflict them for their sin, and God was wroth, he relented in, took it very ill that a people was so devoted to himself, and portioned in himself, should he to enrich himself, and to the world, and choose that for their portion.

“*See, I have hated, I have despised, and I have despised that I have despised.*” (1.) In inquiry that is very displeasing to the God of heaven, the heart is, but he hates it, and therefore hates it, and looks upon it with jealousy. He does not let up a rival with him in the soul: It is a sin which men *blow* the *blow* of Plagues, 18, and in which their neighbours *blow* them. Plagues, 18, the God abhors it. (2.) He impute him, reproved him for it by his prophets, corrected him by his providence, purified him in those very things which he hated upon, and was covetous of. Note, Sinners shall be made to feel from the anger of God; whom he is wroth with, he finites; and covetousness, particularly lays men under the tokens of God’s

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I have been thinking about you a great deal lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you.

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1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

2. Once the problem is identified, the next step is to define the objectives and goals of the project. This helps to clarify what needs to be achieved and provides a clear direction for the work.

3. The third step is to develop a plan or strategy to address the problem. This involves identifying the resources needed, the tasks to be completed, and the timeline for the project.

4. After the plan is developed, the next step is to implement the plan. This involves carrying out the tasks and activities that have been identified in the plan.

5. Finally, the last step is to evaluate the results of the project. This involves comparing the actual outcomes with the objectives and goals that were set at the beginning of the project.

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It is a common mistake to think that the only way to improve the quality of the work is to increase the number of people working on it. This is not always true. In fact, the quality of the work can be improved by increasing the number of people working on it, but only if the work is divided into smaller tasks. If the work is divided into smaller tasks, then each person can focus on a specific task and do it better. This is why it is important to divide the work into smaller tasks. This is why it is important to divide the work into smaller tasks. This is why it is important to divide the work into smaller tasks.

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9. *Chlorophyll content* was determined by the method of Arar and Lee (1995) using a spectrophotometer (Shimadzu UV-1601U, Shimadzu, Japan).

cannot unfay it, That there is no peace to those that allow themselves in any sin: What have they to do with peace?

C H A P. LVIII.

The prophet in this chapter hath his commission and charge renewed to reprove the sinners in Zion, particularly the hypocrites, to shew them their transgressions, ver. 1. And it is intended for admonition and warning to all hypocrites, and is not to be confined to those of any one age. Some refer it primarily to those at that time when Isaiah prophesied; see chap. xxxiii. 14—xxix. 13. Others to the captives in Babylon, the wicked among them, to whom the prophet had declared there was no peace, chap. lvii. 21. Against the terror of that word they thought to shelter themselves with their external performances, particularly their fastings, which they kept up in Babylon, and for some time after their return to their own land, Zech. vii. 3, &c. The prophet therefore here shews them that their devotions would not entitle them to peace, while their conversations were not all of a piece with them. Others think it is principally intended against the hypocrisy of the Jews, especially the Pharisees, before and in our Saviour's time; they boasted of their fastings, but Christ, as the prophet here, shewed them their transgressions, Matt. xxiii. much the same with those they are here charged with. Observe, (1.) The plausible profession of religion which they made, ver. 2. (2.) The boasts they made of that profession, and the blame they laid upon God for taking no more notice of it, ver. 3. (3.) The sins they are charged with, which spoiled the acceptableness of their fasts, ver. 4, 5. (4.) Instructions given them how to keep fasts aright, ver. 6, 7. (5.) Precious promises made to those who do so keep fasts, ver. 8—12. (6.) The like precious promises made to those that justify Sabbaths aright, ver. 13, 14.

1. **C**RY aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. 2. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

When our Lord Jesus promised to send the Comforter, he added, *When he is come he shall convince*, John xvi. 7, 8. for conviction must prepare for comfort, and must also separate between the precious and the vile, and mark out to those whom comfort doth not belong. God had appointed this prophet to comfort his people, chap. xl. 1. Here he appoints him to convince them, and shew them their sins.

1. He must tell them how very bad they really were, ver. 1.

(1.) He must deal faithfully and plainly with them: Though they were called the people of God, and the house of Jacob, though they wore an honourable title and character, by which they were interested in many glorious privileges, yet do not flatter them, but shew them their transgressions and their sins, be particular in telling them their faults, what sins are committed among them which they do not know of? nay what sins are committed by them which they do not acknowledge to be sins; though in some things they are reformed, let them know that in other things they are still as bad as ever. Shew them their transgressions and their sins, i. e. all their transgressions in their sins, their sins and all the aggravations of them, Rev. xvi. 21. Note, 1. God sees sin in his people, in the house of Jacob, and is displeased with it. 2. They are oftentimes unapt and unwilling to see their own sins, and need to have them shewed them, and to be told, Thus and thus thou hast done.

(2.) He must be vehement and in good earnest herein, must cry aloud, and not spare; not spare them, not touch them with his reproofs, as if he were afraid of hurting them, but search the wound to the bottom, lay it bare to the bone; nor spare himself or his own pains; but cry as loud as he can, though he spend his strength and waste his spirits, though he get their ill-will by it, and get himself into an ill name, yet he must not spare: he must lift up his voice like a trumpet, to make those hear of their faults, that were apt to be deaf on that ear: he must give his reproofs in the most powerful and pressing manner possible, as one who desired to be heeded. The trumpet doth not give an uncertain sound, but though loud and shrill is intelligible; so must his alarms be, giving them warning of the fatal consequences of sin, Ezek. xxxiii. 3.

2. He must acknowledge, how very good they seemed to be notwithstanding; ver. 2. *Yet they seek me daily*. When the prophet went about to shew them their transgressions, they pleaded they could see no transgressions they were guilty of; for, they were diligent and constant in attending on God's worship, and what more would he have of them? Now, (1.) He owns the matter of fact to be true; as far as hypocrites do that which is good, they shall not be denied the praise of it, let them make their best of it. It is owned that they have a form of godliness: 1. They go to church, and observe their hours of prayer; they seek me daily: they are very constant in their devotions, and never omit them, nor suffer any thing to put them by. 2. They love to hear good preaching; they delight to know my ways, as Herod, who heard John gladly, and the stony ground that received the seed of the word with joy; it is to them as a *love song*, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. 3. They seem to take a great pleasure in the exercises of religion, and to be in their element when they are at their devotions; they delight in approaching to God, not for his sake to whom they approach, but for the sake of some pleasing circumstance, the company or the festival. 4. They are inquisitive concerning their duty, and seem desirous only to know it, making no question but that then they should do it; they ask of me the ordinances of justice, the rule of piety in the worship of God, the rules of equity in their dealings with men, both which are ordinances of justice. 5. They appear to the eye of the world as if they made conscience of doing their duty; they are as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God; others took them for such, and they themselves took on them to be such; nothing lay open to view that was a contradiction to their profession, but they seemed to be such as they should be. Note, Men may go a great way towards heaven, yet come short; nay, may go to hell with a good reputation. But, (2.) He intimates that this was so far from being a cover or excuse for their sin, that really it was an aggravation of it. Shew them their sins which they go on in, notwithstanding their knowledge of good and evil, sin and duty, and the convictions of their consciences concerning it.

3. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou

takest no knowledge? Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 4. Behold; ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush; and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? 6. Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, that ye break every yoke? 7. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Here we have,

*1. The displeasure which these hypocrites conceived against God for not accepting the services which they themselves had a mighty opinion of, ver. 3. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?* Thus they went in the way of Cain, who was angry at God, and resented it as a mighty affront; that his offering was not accepted. Having gone about to put a cheat upon God by their external services, here they go about to pick a quarrel with God for not being pleased with their services, as if he had not done fairly or justly by them. Observe, (1.) How they boast of themselves, and magnify their own performances; we have fasted and afflicted our souls; not only sought God daily, ver. 2. but have kept some certain times of more solemn devotion. Some think, it refers to the yearly fast, which was called the day of atonement; others, to their arbitrary occasional fasts. Note, It is common for unhumiliated hearts to be proud of their professions of humiliation, as the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 12. *I fast twice in the week*. (2.) What they expected from their performances; they thought God should take great notice of, and own himself a debtor to them for their services. Note, It is a common thing for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion to promise themselves that acceptance with God which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course or for a complement. (3.) How heinously they take it, that God had not put some particular marks of his favour upon them, that he had not presently delivered them out of their troubles, and advanced them to honour and prosperity; they charge God with injustice and partiality; and seem resolved to throw up their religion, and justify themselves in doing so; with this, that they had found no profit in praying to God, Job. xxi. 14, 15. *Mal. iii. 14*. Note, Reigning hypocrisy often breaks out into daring impiety, and an open contempt and reproach of God and religion, for that which the hypocrisy itself must bear all the blame of. Sinners reflect upon religion as a hard and melancholy service, and which there is nothing to be got by, when really it is long of themselves that it seems so to them, and because they are not sincere in it.

2. The true reason assigned why God did not accept their fastings, nor answer the prayers they made on their fast-days; it was, because they did not fast aright: *to God even to him*, Zech. vii. 5. they fasted indeed, but they persisted in their sins, and did not, as the Ninevites, turned every one from his evil way; but in the day of their fast, and notwithstanding the professed humiliations and covenants of that day, they went on to find pleasure; i. e. to do whatsoever seemed right in their own eyes, lawful or unlawful, *quicquid libet, licet*; though they seemed to afflict their souls, they still gratified their lusts as much as ever. (1.) They were as covetous and unmerciful as ever; ye exact all your labours from your servants, and will neither release them according to the law, nor relax the rigour of their servitude. See Jer. xxxiv. 8. where we find this to be their fault before the captivity, and Neh. v. 2. where we find it to be no less their fault after their captivity, notwithstanding all their solemn fasts: ye exact all your dues, or debts, so some read it; are as rigorous and severe in extorting what you demand from those that are poor as ever you were, though it was at the close of the yearly fast that the release was proclaimed. (2.) They were contentions and spiteful, ver. 4. *Behold, ye fast for strife and debate*. When they proclaimed a fast to deprecate God's judgments, they pretended to search for those sins which provoked God to threaten them with his judgments, and under that pretence perhaps particular persons were falsely accused, as Naboth, in the day of Jezebel's fast, 1 Kings xxi. 12. Or, the contending parties among them upon those occasions were bitter and severe in their reflections one upon another; one side crying out, It is long of you, and the other, It is long of you, that our deliverance is not wrought. Thus, instead of judging themselves, which is the proper work of a fast-day, they condemned one another. They fasted for strife; i. e. with emulation which should make the most plausible appearance on a fast-day, and humour the matter best. Nor was it only tongue-quarrels that were fomented in the times of their fasting, but they came to blows too; ye smite with the fist of wickedness: The cruel task-masters beat their servants, and the creditors their insolvent debtors, whom they delivered to the tormentors; they abused poor innocents with wicked hands. Now, while they thus continued in sin, in those very sins which were directly contrary to the intention of a fasting-day, (1.) God would not allow them the use of such solemnities; ye shall not fast at all, if ye fast as you do this day, causing your voice to be heard on high, in the heat of your clamours one against another; or in your devotions, which you perform so as to make them to be taken notice of for ostentation, *Bring me no more of these empty, noisy, vain oblations*, chap. i. 13. Note, Those are justly forbidden the honour of a profession of religion, that will not submit to the power of it. (2.) He would not accept of them in the use of them: *Ye shall not fast*, i. e. it shall not be looked upon as a fast, nor shall the voice of your prayers on those days be heard on high in heaven. Note, Those that fast and pray, and yet go on in their wicked ways, do but mock God and deceive themselves.

3. Plain instructions given concerning the true nature of a religious fast. In general, a fast is intended, (1.) For the honouring and pleasing of God; it must be such a performance as he hath chosen, ver. 5. it must be an acceptable day to the Lord, in the duties of which we must study to approve ourselves to him, and obtain his favour, else it is not a fast, else there is nothing done to any purpose. (2.) For the humbling and abasing of ourselves. A fast is a day to afflict the soul; if it do not express a genuine sorrow for sin, and do not promote a real mortification of sin, it is not a fast; the law of the day of atonement was, that on that day they should afflict their souls, Lev. xvi. 29. That must be done on a fast-day which is a real affliction to the soul, as far as it is yet unregenerate and un sanctified, though a real pleasure and advantage to the soul as far as it is itself.

It concerns us therefore to enquire on a fast-day, what it is that will be acceptable to God, and afflictive to our corrupt nature, and tending to its mortification.

1. We are here told negatively what is not the fast that God hath chosen, and which doth not amount to the afflicting of the soul. (1.) It is not enough to look demure, to put on a grave and melancholy aspect, to bow down the head like a bulrush that is withered and broken; as the hypocrites, that were of a *just countenance, and disfigured their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast*, Matt. vi. 16. Hanging down the head did indeed well enough become the publican, whose heart was truly humbled and broken for sin, and therefore in token of that *would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven*, Luke xviii. 13. But when it was only mimicked, as here, it was justly ridiculed, it is but hanging down the head like a bulrush, which no body regards or takes any notice of. As the hypocrite's humiliations are but like the hanging down of a bulrush, so his elevations in his hopes are but like the *flourishing of a bulrush*, Job viii. 11, 12. which *while it is yet in its greenness withers before any other herb*. (2.) It is not enough to do penance, to mortify the body a little, while the body of sin is untouched. It is not enough for a man to spread sackcloth and ashes under him, which doth indeed give him some uneasiness for the present, but is soon forgotten when he returns to *stretch himself upon his beds of ivory*, Amos vi. 4. *Wilt thou call this a fast?* No, it is but the shadow and carcass of a fast. *Wilt thou call this a fast?* No, so far from being so, that the hypocrisy of it is an abomination to him. Note, The shews of religion, though they shew never so well in the eye of the world, will not be accepted of God without the substance of it.

2. We are here told positively what is the fast that God hath chosen; what that is which will recommend a fast-day to the divine acceptance, and what is indeed afflicting the soul, i. e. crushing and subduing the corrupt nature: It is not afflicting the soul for a day (as some read it, ver. 5.) that will serve; no, it must be the business of our whole lives. It is here required,

(1.) That we be just to those with whom we have dealt hardly. The fast that God hath chosen consists in reforming our lives, and undoing what we have done amiss, ver. 6. *To loose the bands of wickedness*, i. e. the bands which we have wickedly tied, and by which others are bound out from their right, or bound down under severe usage. Those which perhaps were at first bands of justice, tying men to pay a due debt, yet when the debt is exacted with rigour from those whom providence hath reduced and emptied, they become bands of wickedness, and they must be loosed, or they will bring us into bands of guilt much more terrible. It is to undo the heavy burden laid on the back of the poor servant, under which he is ready to sink; it is to let the oppressed go free from the oppression which makes his life bitter to him: Let the prisoner for debt, that has nothing to pay, be discharged, let the vexatious action be let fall, let the servant that is forcibly detained beyond the time of his servitude be released, and thus break every yoke; not only let go those that are wrongfully kept under the yoke, but break the yoke of slavery itself that it may not serve again another time, nor any be made again to serve under it.

(2.) That we be charitable to those that stand in need of charity, ver. 7. The particulars in the former verse may be taken as acts of charity, that we not only release those whom we have unjustly oppressed, that is justice, but that we contribute to the rescue and ransom of those that are oppressed by others, to the release of captives, and the payment of the debts of the poor; but those in this verse are plainly acts of charity: This then is the fast that God hath chosen, (1.) To provide food for those that want it, that is put first as the most necessary, and which the poor can but a little while live without: it is to break thy bread to the hungry. Observe, It must be thy bread, that which is honestly got, not that which thou hast robbed others of; the bread which thou thyself hast occasion for, the bread of thine allowance, we must deny ourselves, that we may have to give to him that needeth: Thy bread which thou hast spared from thyself and thy family, on the fast-day, if that or the value of it, be not given to the poor, it is the miser's fast, which he makes a handle of, it is fasting for the world, not for God: It is to break thy bread to the hungry, not only to give them that which is already broken meat, but break bread on purpose for them; give them loaves, and do not put them off with scraps. (2.) To provide lodging for those that want it; it is to take care of the poor that are cast out, that are forced from their dwelling, turned out of house and harbour; are cast out as rebels, so some critics render it, that are attained, and whom therefore it is highly penal to protect, yet if they suffer unjustly, make no difficulty of sheltering them; do not only find out quarters for them, and pay for their lodging elsewhere, but, which is a greater act of kindness, bring them to thine own house, make them thine own guests: Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for though thou mayest not, as some have done, thereby entertain angels, thou mayest entertain Christ himself, who will recompense it in the resurrection of the just: *I was a stranger, and ye took me in*. (3.) To provide clothing for those that want it; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, both to shelter him from the injuries of the weather, and to enable him to appear decently among his neighbours; give him clothes to come to church in, and in these and other instances hide not thyself from thine own flesh: Some understand it more strictly of thine own kindred and relations, if those of thine own house and family fall into decay, *thou art worse than an infidel* if thou dost not provide for them, 1 Tim. v. 8. Others, more generally, all that partake of the human nature are to be looked upon as our own flesh, for have we not all one Father? And for this reason we must not hide ourselves from them, not contrive to be out of the way when a poor petitioner inquires for us, not look another way when a moving object of charity and compassion presents itself; let us remember they are flesh of our flesh, and therefore we ought to sympathize with them, and in doing good to them we really do good to our own flesh, and spirit too at long run; for thus we lay up for ourselves a good foundation, a good bond for the time to come.

8. ¶ Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward. 9. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; 10. And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day. 11. And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden,

and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. 12. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Here are precious promises for those to feast freely and cheerfully upon by faith, who keeps the fast that God has chosen; let them know that God will make it up to them.

Here is, 1. A farther account of the duty to be done in order to our interest in these promises, ver. 9, 10. and here, as before, it is required that we both do justly and love mercy, that we cease to do evil and learn to do well. (1.) We must abstain from all acts of violence and fraud; those must be taken away from the midst of thee, from the midst of thy person, i. e. out of thy heart; so some: Thou must not only refrain from the practice of injury; but mortify in thee all inclination and disposition towards it. Or, from the midst of thy people; those in authority must not only not be oppressive themselves, but must do all they can to prevent and restrain it in all within their jurisdiction; they must not only *break the yoke*, ver. 6. but take away the yoke, that those who have been oppressed may never be re-enslaved, as they were, Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11. they must likewise *forbear threatening*, Eph. vi. 9. and take away the *putting forth of the finger*, which seems to have been then, as sometimes with us, a sign of displeasure, and the indication of a purpose to correct: Let not the finger be put forth to point at those that are poor and in misery, and so to expose them to contempt; such expressions of contumely as are provoking, and the products of ill-nature ought to be banished from all societies; and let them not *speak vanity*, flattery, or fraud to one another, but let all conversation be governed by sincerity. And perhaps that dissimulation, which is the bane of friendship, is meant by the putting forth of the finger, as Prov. vi. 13; *By touching with the finger*, or it is putting forth the finger with the ring on it, which was the badge of authority, and which therefore they produced when they spake iniquity, i. e. gave unrighteous sentences. (2.) We must abound in all acts of charity and beneficence; We must not only give alms according as the necessities of the poor require, but, (1.) We must give freely and cheerfully, and from a principle of charity; we must *draw out our soul to the hungry*, ver. 10. not only draw out the money, and reach forth the hand, but do this from the heart, heartily, and without grudging; from a principle of compassion, and with a tender affection to such as thou seest to be in misery; let the heart go along with the gift, for God loves a cheerful giver, and so doth a poor man too: When our Lord Jesus healed and fed the multitude, it was with a compassion on them. (2.) We must give plentifully and largely, so as not to tantalize, but to satisfy the afflicted soul; do not only fill the belly of the hungry, but gratify the desire of the afflicted; and if it lies in your power make them easy. What are we born for, and what have we our abilities of body, mind, and estate for, but to do all the good we can in this world with them; and the poor we have always with us.

2. Here is a full account of the blessings and benefits which attend the performance of this duty. If a person, a family, a people, be thus disposed to every thing that is good, let them know for their comfort that they shall find God their bountiful rewarder, and what they lay out in works of charity shall be abundantly made up to them.

1. God will surprise them with the returns of mercy after great affliction, which shall be as welcome as the light of the morning after a long and dark night, ver. 8. *Then shall thy light break forth as the morning*, and ver. 10. *Thy light shall rise in obscurity*. Thou hast been long buried alive, thou shalt recover thine eminency; long overwhelmed with grief, thou shalt again look pleasant as the dawning day. They that are cheerful in doing good, God will make them cheerful in enjoying good; and this also is a special gift of God, Eccles. ii. 24. They that have shewed mercy shall find mercy: Job, who in his prosperity had done a great deal of good, though he was reduced, yet God then raised him up friends that helped to let him up again, and his light rose in obscurity: And not only the light, which is sweet, but thy health too, or the healing of the wounds thou hast long complained of, shall bring forth speedily; all thy grievances shall be redressed, and thou shalt renew thy youth, and recover thy vigour: Those that have helped others out of trouble, God will help them when it is their turn.

2. God will put honour upon them; good works shall be recompensed with a good name; this is included in that light which riseth out of obscurity. Though a man's extraction be mean, his family obscure, and he has no external advantages to gain him honour, yet if he do good in his place, that will procure him respect and veneration, and his darkness shall by this means become as the noon day, i. e. he shall become very eminent, and shine bright in his generation. See here, what is the surest way for a man to make himself illustrious, let him study to do good; he that would be the greatest of all, and best beloved, let him by humility and industry make himself a servant of all. Thy righteousness shall then go before thee, i. e. it shall introduce thee into the esteem of many, and make thee an interest: *Thy righteousness shall answer for thee*, as Jacob saith, Gen. xxx. 33. i. e. It shall silence reproaches, nay, it shall bespeak thee more praises than thy humility can be pleaded with. He that hath given to the poor, his righteousness endures for ever, i. e. the honour of it, Psal. cxli. 9.

3. They shall always be safe under the divine protection. Thy righteousness shall go before thee as thy vanguard, to secure thee from enemies that charge thee in the front, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward, the gathering host, to bring up those of thee that are weary and are left behind, and to secure thee from the enemies, that, like Amalek, fall upon thy rear. Observe, How good people are safe on all sides, look which way they will, behind them, before them, look back, look forward, they see themselves safe, and find themselves easy and quiet from the fear of evil; and observe what it is that is their defence, it is their righteousness, and the glory of the Lord, i. e. Christ, so some understand it, for it is by him that we are justified, and God is glorified: He it is that goes before us, and is the captain of our salvation, as he is the Lord our righteousness; he it is that is our reward, on whom alone we can depend for safety when our sins pursue us, and are ready to take hold on us. Or, God himself in his providence and grace shall both go before thee as thy guide to conduct thee, and attend thee as thy rewarder to protect thee, and this shall be the reward of thy righteousness, and so shall be for the glory of the Lord as the rewarder of it.

4. God will be always nigh unto them to hear their prayers, ver. 9. As on the one hand he that shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, shall himself cry and God will not hear him; so on the other hand, he that is liberal to the poor, his prayers shall come up with his alms for a memorial before God, as Cornelius's did, Acts x. iv. *Then shalt thou call on thy fast-days*, which ought to be days of prayer, and the Lord shall answer, shall give thee the things thou callest to him for; thou shalt cry when thou art in any distress or sudden fright, and he shall say, Here I am, which is a very con-

descending

descending expression of God's readiness to hear prayer. When God calls to us by his word, it becomes us to say, *Here we are, what saith our Lord unto his servants?* But that God should say to us, *Behold me, here I am*, is strange. When we cry to him, as if he were at a distance, he will let us know that he is near, even at our right hand, nearer than we thought he was; *It is I, be not afraid*: when danger is near, our protector is nearer, a very pleasant help; here I am; ready to give you what you want, and do for you what you desire; what have you to say to me? God is attentive to the prayers of the upright, *Psal.* cxxx. 2. No sooner do they call to him, but he answers, ready, ready; wherever they are praying, God saith, here I am hearing; I am in the midst of you; nigh unto them in all things, *Deut.* iv. 7.

5. God will direct them in all difficult and doubtful cases, *ver.* 11. *The Lord shall guide thee continually.* While we are here in the wilderness of this world, we have need of continual direction from heaven, for if at any time we be left to ourselves, we shall certainly miss our way; and therefore it is to those who are good in God's sight, he gives that wisdom which in all cases is profitable to direct, and will be to them *instead of eyes*, *Ecc.* ii. 26. And his providence will make their way plain to them, both what is their duty, and what will be most for their comfort.

6. God will give them abundance of satisfaction in their own minds. The world, as it is a wilderness in respect of wanderings, so that they need to be guided continually, so also in respect of wants, which makes it necessary that they have continual supplies; as Israel in the wilderness had not only the pillar of cloud to guide them continually, but manna and water out of the rock, to satisfy their souls in drought, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, *Psal.* lxxiii. 1. To a good man God gives not only wisdom and knowledge, but joy; he is satisfied in himself with the testimony of his conscience, and in the assurances of God's favour. These will satisfy the soul, will put gladness into the heart, even in the drought of affliction; these will make fat the bones, and fill them with marrow; will give thee that pleasure which will be a support to thee, as the bones to the body, that joy of the Lord which will be thy strength. He shall give thy bones rest, so some read it, rest from the pain and sickness which they have laboured under and been chastened with; so it agrees with that promise made to the merciful, *Psal.* xli. 1, 2. *The Lord shall make all his bed in his sickness.* Thou shalt be like a watered garden, so flourishing and fruitful in graces and comforts; and like a spring of water, like a garden that has a spring of water in it, whose waters fail either in droughts or frosts. The principle of holy love in those that are good shall be a well of living water, *John* iv. 14. As a spring of water, though it is continually sending forth its streams, yet is always full; so the charitable man abounds in good as he abounds in doing good, and is never the poorer for his liberality. He that watereth shall himself be watered.

They and their families shall be public blessings. It is a good reward to those that are fruitful and useful, to be more so, and especially to have those who descend from them to be so too. This is here promised, *ver.* 12. They that now are of thee, thy princes, and nobles, and great men, shall have such authority and influence as they never had; or, those that hereafter shall be of thee, thy posterity, shall be serviceable to their generation, as thou art to thine; which completes the satisfaction of a good man as to this world, to think that those that come after him shall be doing good when he is gone. (1.) They shall re-edify cities that have been long in ruins: shall build the old waste places which had lain so long desolate, that the re-building of them was quite despaired of. This was fulfilled when the captives after their return repaired the cities of Judah, and dwelt in them, and many of those in Israel too, which had lain waste ever since the carrying away of the ten tribes. (2.) They shall carry on and finish that good work which was begun long before, and shall be helped over the obstructions that had retarded the progress of it; they shall raise up to the top that building, the foundation of which was laid long since, and has been for many generations in the rearing: this was fulfilled when the building of the temple was revived, after it had stood still for many years, *Ezra* v. 1. Or they shall raise up foundations which shall continue for many generations yet to come; they shall do that good which shall be of lasting consequence. (3.) They shall have the blessing and praise of all about them; thou shalt be called, and celebrated as the repairer of the breach, the breach made by the enemy in the wall of a besieged city, which whole has the courage and dexterity to make up, or make good, gains great applause: Happy they who make up the breach at which virtue is running out, and judgments breaking in. Thou shalt be the restorer of paths, safe and quiet paths, not only to travel in but to dwell in, so safe and quiet, that people shall make no difficulty of building their houses by the road side. The sum is, that if they keep such fasts as God hath chosen, he will settle them again in their former peace and prosperity, and there shall be none to make them afraid. See *Zech.* vii. 5—9.—viii. 3, 4, 5. And it teaches us, that those who do justly and love mercy, shall have the comfort of it in this world.

13. ¶ If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: 14. Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD: and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Great stress was always laid upon the due observation of the sabbath-day, and it was particularly required from the Jews when they were captives in Babylon, because by keeping the day in honour of the Creator, they distinguished themselves from the worshippers of the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth; see *chap.* lvi. 1, 2. where keeping the sabbath is joined, as here, with *keeping judgment and doing justice*. Some indeed understand this of the day of atonement, which they think is the fast spoken of in the former part of the chapter, and which is called a *sabbath of rest*, *Lev.* xxiii. 32. But as the fasts before spoken of seem to be those that were occasional, so this sabbath is doubtless the weekly sabbath, that great sign between God and his professing people; his appointing it, a sign of his favour to them; and their observing it, a sign of their obedience to him. Now observe here,

1. How the sabbath is to be sanctified, *ver.* 13. and there remaining still a sabbatism for the people of God, this law of the sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord's day.

(1.) Nothing must be done that puts contempt upon the sabbath-day, or looks like having mean thoughts of it, when God has so highly dignified it. We must turn away our foot from the sabbath, from trampling upon it, as profane atheistical people do; from travelling on that day, so some; turn

away our foot from doing our pleasure on that holy day, i. e. from living at large, and taking a liberty to do what we please on sabbath-days, without the controul and restraint of conscience; or from indulging ourselves in the pleasures of sense, in which the modern Jews wickedly place the sanctification of the sabbath, though it is as great a profanation of it as any thing. On sabbath-days we must not do our own ways, i. e. not follow our callings; not find our own pleasure, i. e. not follow our sports and recreations, nay, we must not speak our own words, not words that concern either our callings or our pleasures; we must not allow ourselves a liberty of speech on that day as on other days: for we must then mind God's ways, make religion the business of the day; must choose the things that please him, and speak his words, speak of divine things as we sit in the house and walk by the way; in all we say and do we must put a difference between this day and other days.

2. Every thing must be done that puts an honour on the day, and is expressive of our high thoughts of it; we must call it a delight, not a task and a burden; must delight ourselves in it, in the restraints it lays upon us, and the services it obligeth us to; we must be in our element when we are worshipping God, and in communion with him; *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!* We must not only count it a delight, but call it so; must openly profess the complacency we take in the day, and the duties of it; call it so to God in thanksgiving for it, and earnest desires of his grace to enable us to do the work of the day in its day, because we delight in it; call it so to others, to invite them to come and share in the pleasure of it; and we must call it so to ourselves, that we may not entertain the least thoughts of wishing the sabbath gone, that we may sell corn. We must call it the Lord's holy day, and honourable; call it holy, separated from common use, and devoted to God and to his service; call it the holy of the Lord, the day which he hath sanctified to himself; even in Old Testament times the sabbath was called the Lord's day; and therefore is fitly called so still, and for a farther reason, it is the Lord Christ's day, *Rev.* i. 10. It is holy because it is the Lord's day, and upon both accounts it is honourable; it is a beauty of holiness that is upon it; it is ancient, and its antiquity is its honour; and we must make it appear that we look upon it as honourable by honouring him, i. e. God, on that day; We then put honour upon the day, when we give honour to him that instituted it, and to whose honour it is dedicated.

2. What the reward is of sabbath sanctification, *ver.* 14. If we thus remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy.

1. We shall have the comfort of it; the work will be its own wages. If we call the sabbath a delight, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord, and he will more and more manifest himself to us as the delightful subject of our thoughts and meditations, and the delightful object of our best affections. Note, The more pleasure we take in serving God, the more pleasure we shall find in it: If we go about duty with cheerfulness, we shall go from it with satisfaction, and shall have reason to say, It is good to be here, good to draw near to God.

2. We shall have the honour of it: *I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth*; which notes not only great security, (as that, *Isa.* xxxiii. 16. *He shall dwell on high*) but great dignity and advancement; thou shalt ride in state, shalt appear conspicuous, and the eyes of all thy neighbours shall be upon thee. It was said of Israel, when God led them triumphantly out of Egypt, that he made them to ride on the high places of the earth, *Deut.* xxxii. 12, 13. Those that honour God and his sabbath, he will thus honour them. If God by his grace enable us to live above the world, and so to manage it, as not only not to be hindered by it, but to be furthered and carried on by it in our journey towards heaven, then he makes us to ride on the high places of the earth.

3. We shall have the profit of it; *I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father*, i. e. with all the blessings of the covenant, and all the precious products of Canaan, which was a type of heaven, and which were the heritage of Jacob. Observe, The heritage of believers is what they shall not only be portioned with hereafter, but fed with now; fed with the hopes of it, and not flattered; fed with the earnestness and foretastes of it; and they that are so fed, have reason to say that they are well fed: And that we may depend upon it, it is added, *the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*; you may take God's word for it, for he cannot lie nor deceive; what his mouth hath spoken his hand will give, his hand will do, and not one iota or tittle of his good promise shall fall to the ground. Blessed therefore, thrice blessed is he that doeth this, and lays hold on it, that keeps the sabbath from polluting it.

C H A P. LIX.

In this chapter we have sin appearing exceeding sinful, and grace appearing exceeding gracious; and as what is here said of the sinner's sin, *ver.* 7, 8, is applied to the general corruption of mankind, *Rom.* iii. 15. so what is here said of a redeemer, *ver.* 20, is applied to Christ. *Rom.* xi. 26. (1.) It is here charged upon this people that they had themselves stopped the current of God's favours to them, and the particular sins are instanced in, which kept good things from them, *ver.* 1—8. (2.) It is here charged upon them, that they had themselves procured the judgments of God upon them; and they are told, both what the judgments were which they had brought upon their own heads, *ver.* 9—11. and what the sins were that provoked God to send those judgments, *ver.* 12—15. (3.) It is here promised that notwithstanding this God would work deliverance for them, purely for his own name's sake, *ver.* 16—19. and would reserve mercy in store for them, and entail it upon them, *ver.* 20, 21.

1. BEHOLD, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. 3. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. 4. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. 5. They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. 6. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in

in their hands. 7. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; warring and destruction are in their paths. 8. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

The prophet here rectifies the mistakes of those who had been quarrelling with God, because they had not the deliverances wrought for them which they had been often fasting and praying for, chap. lviii. 3. Now here he shews.

1. That it was not long of God; they had no reason to lay the fault upon him that they were not saved out of the hands of their enemies: For, (1.) He was still as able to help as ever: his hand is not shortened, *i. e.* his power is not at all lessened, straitened, or abridged; whether we consider the extent of his power, or the efficacy of it: God can reach as far as ever, and with as strong a hand as ever. Note, The church's salvation comes from the hand of God, and that is not waxed weak; not at all shortened. *Is the Lord's hand waxen short?* saith God to Moses, *Numb. xi. 23.* No, it is not; he will not have it thought so: Neither length of time, nor strength of enemies, nor weakness of instruments, can shorten or straiten the power of God, with which it is all one to save by many or by few. (2.) He was still as ready and willing to help as ever, in answer to prayer; his ear is not heavy that it cannot hear: Though he has many prayers to hear and answer, and though he has been long hearing prayer, yet he is still as ready to hear prayer as ever: the prayer of the upright is as much his delight as ever it was, and the promises which are pleaded and put in suit in prayer, are still yea and amen, inviolably sure: more is implied than is expressed, not only his ear is not heavy, but he is quick of hearing; *even before they call he answers*; *Isa. lxxv. 24.* If our prayers be not answered, and the salvation we wait for be not wrought for us, it is not because God is weary of hearing prayer, but because we are weary of praying; not because his ear is heavy when we speak to him, but because our ears are heavy when he speaks to us.

2. That it was long of themselves, they stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door; God was coming towards them in ways of mercy, and they hindered him; your iniquities have kept good things from you, *Jer. v. 25.* See what mischief sin doth. 1. It hinders God's mercies from coming down upon us, it is a partition-wall that separates between us and God. Notwithstanding the infinite distance that is between God and man by nature, there was a correspondence settled between them, till sin set them at variance, justly provoked God against man, and unjustly alienated man from God; thus it separates between them and God. He is your God, your's in profession, and therefore there is so much the more malignity and mischievousness in sin, which separates between us and him; it hides his face from us, which notes great displeasure, *Deut. xxxi. 17.* It provokes him in anger to withdraw his gracious presence, to suspend the tokens of his favour, and the instances of his help; he hides his face, as refusing to be seen or spoken with: See here sin in its colours, sin exceeding sinful, withdrawing the creature from his allegiance to his Creator; and see sin in its consequences, sin exceeding hurtful, separating us from God, and so separating us not only from all good, but to all evil, *Deut. xxix. 31.* which is the very quintessence of the curse. 2. It hinders our prayers from coming up unto God; it provokes him to hide his face that he will not hear, as he hath said, *Isa. i. 15.* If we regard iniquity in our heart, if we indulge it, and allow ourselves in it, God will not hear our prayers, *Psal. lxxvi. 18.* We cannot expect he should countenance us while we go on to affront him.

Now to justify God in hiding his face from them, and proceeding in his controversy with them, the prophet shews very largely in the following verses how many and great their iniquities were, according to the charge given him, *chap. lviii. 1.* To shew God's people their transgressions; and it is a black bill of indictment that is here drawn up against them, consisting of many particulars, any one of which was enough to separate between them and a just and a holy God. Let us endeavour to reduce these articles of impeachment to proper heads.

1. We must begin with their thoughts, for there all sin begins, and thence it takes its rise: *Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity*, *ver. 7.* Their imaginations are so, only evil continually; their projects and designs are so, they are continually contriving some mischief or other, and how to compass the gratification of some base lust, *ver. 4.* They conceive mischief in their fancy, purpose, counsel, and resolution; thus the embryo receives its shape and life, and then they bring forth iniquity, put it in execution when it is ripened for it, though it be in pain perhaps that the iniquity is brought forth through the oppositions of providence and the checks of their own consciences; yet when they have compassed their wicked purpose, they look upon it with as much pride and pleasure as if it were a *man-child born into the world*; thus when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, *Jam. i. 15.* This is called *ver. 15.* *hatching the cockatrice' eggs, and weaving the spider's web.* See how the thoughts and contrivances of wicked men are employed, and about what they set their wits on work. (1.) At the best it is about that which is foolish and frivolous; their thoughts are vain, like weaving the spider's web, which the poor silly animal takes a great deal of pains about, and when all is done, it is a weak insignificant thing, a reproach to the place where it is, and which the besom sweeps away in an instant: such are the thoughts which worldly men entertain themselves with, building castles in the air, and pleasing themselves with imaginary satisfactions; like the spider that takes hold with her hands very finely, *Prov. xxx. 28.* but cannot keep her hold. (2.) Too often it is about that which is malicious and spiteful; they hatch the eggs of the cockatrice or adder, which are poisonous and produce venomous creatures, such are the thoughts of the wicked, that delight in doing mischief. He that eats of their eggs, *i. e.* that has any dealings with them, dieth, *i. e.* he is in danger of having some mischief or other done him, and that which is crushed in order to be eaten of, or which begins to be hatched, and you promise yourself some useful fowl from it, it breaks out into a viper, which it is at your peril if you meddle with it: happy they that have least to do with such ill men. Even the spider's web they wove was with a spiteful design to catch flies in it, and make a prey of them, for rather than not be doing mischief, they will play at small game.

2. Out of this abundance of wickedness in their heart their mouth speaks, and yet it doth not always speak out the wickedness that is within, but for the more effectual compassing of the mischievous design, it is dissembled and covered with much fair speech, *ver. 3.* *Your lips have spoken lies*, and again, *ver. 4.* *they speak lies*, pretending kindness, where they intend the greatest mischief; or by flanders and false accusations they blasted the credit and reputation of those they had a spite to, and so did them a real mischief unseen, and perhaps by suborning witnesses against them took from them their estates and lives; for a false tongue is sharp arrows and coals of

juniper, and every thing that is mischievous: "your tongue has muttered 'perverberness';" when they could not for shame speak their malice against their neighbours aloud, or durst not for fear of being disproved and put to confusion, they muttered it secretly. Backbiters are called whisperers.

3. Their actions were all of a piece with their thoughts and words. They were guilty of shedding innocent blood, a crime of the most heinous nature; *your hands are defiled with blood*, *ver. 3.* for blood is defiling, leaves an indelible stain of guilt upon the conscience, which nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it from; and this not by surprise, or when there was something of a force put upon them, but, *ver. 7.* *their feet run to this evil*, naturally and eagerly; and, hurried on by the impetus of their malice and revenge, they make haste to shed innocent blood, as if they were afraid of losing an opportunity to do a barbarous thing, *Prov. i. 16.* *Jer. xxii. 17.* *Warring and destruction are in their paths.* Wherever they go they carry mischief along with them, and the tendency of their way is to lay waste and destroy, nor do they care what havoc they make; nor do they only thirst after blood, but with other iniquity are their fingers defiled, *ver. 3.* they wrong people in their estates, and make every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. They trust in vanity, *ver. 4. i. e.* they depend upon their arts of cozenage to enrich themselves with, which will prove vanity to them, and their deceiving others will but deceive themselves; their works, which they take so much pains about, and have their hearts so much upon, are all works of iniquity; their whole business is one continued course of oppressions and vexations, and the act of violence is in their hands, according to the arts of violence that are in their heads, and the thoughts of violence in their hearts.

4. No methods are taken to redress these grievances, and reform these abuses: *ver. 4.* *None calleth for justice*, none complains of the violation of the sacred laws of justice, nor seeks to right those that suffer wrong, or to get the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness, and those lewd practices which are the shame, and threaten to be the bane of the nation. Note, When justice is not done, there is blame to be laid not only upon the magistrates that should administer justice, but upon the people that should call for it: private persons ought to contribute to the public good by discovering secret wickedness, and giving those an opportunity to punish it, that have it in the power of their hands; but it is ill with a state when princes rule ill, and the people love to have it so. Truth is opposed, and there is not any that pleadeth for it, not any that has the conscience and courage to appear in defence of an honest cause, and confront a prosperous fraud and wrong: The way of peace is as little regarded as the way of truth, they know it not; *i. e.* they never study the things that make for peace, no care is taken to prevent or punish the breaches of the peace, and to accommodate matters in difference among neighbours; they are utter strangers to every thing that looks quiet and peaceable, and affect that which is blustering and turbulent. *There is no judgment in their goings*, *i. e.* They have not any sense of justice in their dealings, it is a thing they make no account of at all, but can easily break through all its fences, if they stand in the way of their malicious, covetous designs.

5. In all this they act foolishly, very foolishly, and as much against their interest, as against reason and equity. They that practice iniquity trust in vanity, which will certainly deceive them, *ver. 4.* Their webs which they weave with so much art and industry, *shall not become garments*, neither shall they cover themselves either for shelter or for ornament with their works, *ver. 6.* They may do hurt to others with their projects, but can never do any real service or kindness to themselves by them; there is nothing to be got by sin, and so it will appear when profit and loss come to be compared. Those paths of iniquity are crooked paths, *ver. 8.* which will perplex them, but will never bring them to their journey's end; whosoever goes therein, though they say they shall have peace though they go on, deceive themselves, for they shall not know peace, as appears by the following verses.

9. ¶ Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. 10. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon-day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. 11. We roar all like bears, and mourn fore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. 12. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; 13. In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. 14. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. 15. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

The scope of this paragraph is the same with that of the last, to shew that sin is the great mischief-maker; as it is that that keeps good things from us, so it is that that brings evil things upon us. But as there it is spoken by the prophet in God's name to the people for their conviction and humiliation, and that God might be justified when he speaketh and clear when he judgeth; so here it seems to be spoken by the people of God, as an acknowledgment of that which was there told them, and an expression of their humble submission and subscription to the justice and equity of God's proceedings against them. Their uncircumcised hearts here seem to be humbled in some measure, and they are brought to confess; the confession is at least extorted from them, that God hath justly walked contrary to them, because they had walked contrary to him.

1. They acknowledge that God had contended with them, and had walked contrary to them. Their case was very deplorable, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* (1.) They were in distress, trampled upon and oppressed by their enemies, unjustly dealt with, and ruled with rigour, and God did not appear for them to plead their just and injured cause. "Judgment is far from us, neither doth justice overtake us." Though as to our persecutors we are sure we have right on our side, and they are the wrong-doers, yet we are not relieved, we are not righted; we have not done justice to one another, and therefore God suffers our enemies to deal thus unjustly with us, and we are as far as ever from being restored to our right and recovering our property

again; oppression is near us, and judgment is far from us, our enemies are far from giving our case its due consideration, but still hurry us on with the violence of their oppressions, and justice doth not overtake us to rescue us out of their hands. (2.) Herein their expectations were sadly disappointed, which made their case the more sad. We wait for light as they that wait for the morning, but behold obscurity; we cannot discern the least dawning of the day of our deliverance; *we look for judgment but there is none*, ver. 11. neither God or man appears for our succour; we look for salvation, because God (we think) has promised it, and we have prayed for it with fasting, we look for it as for brightness, but it is far off from us, as far off as ever for ought we can perceive, and still we walk in darkness; and the higher our expectations have been raised, the sorer is the disappointment. (3.) They were quite at a loss what to do to help themselves, and were at their wits' end, ver. 10. *We grope for the wall like the blind*, we see no way open for our relief, nor know which way to expect it, or what to do in order to it. If we shut our eyes against the light of divine truth, it is just with God to hide from our eyes the things that belong to our peace; and if we use not our eyes as we should, so let us be as if we had no eyes; they that will not see their duty shall not see their interest. They whom God hath given up to a judicial blindness are strangely infatuated, they stumble at noon-day as in the night, they see not either those dangers or those advantages which all about them see; *Quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat*. Those that love darkness rather than light, so shall their doom be. (4.) They sunk into despair, and were quite overwhelmed with grief, the remarks of which appeared in every man's countenance; they grew melancholy upon it, stunned conversation, and affected solitude; we are in desolate places as dead men. The state of the Jews in Babylon is represented by *dead and dry bones*, Ezek. xxvii. 1. and the redition of the comparison there, ver. 11. explains this text, *our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts*; in this despair the sorrow and anguish of some was loud and noisy, we roar like bears; the sorrows of others was silent, and preyed more upon their spirits, we mourn sore like doves, like doves of the valleys; we mourn both for our iniquities, Ezek. vii. 16. and for our calamities. Thus they own that *the hand of the Lord was gone out against them*.

2. They acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to contend with them; that he had done right, for they had done wickedly, ver. 12, 13, 14, 15. (1.) They owned that they had sinned, and that to this day they were in great trespass, as Ezra speaks, chap. x. 7. *Our transgressions are with us*; the guilt of them is upon us, the power of them prevails among us, we are not yet reformed, nor have we parted with our sins though they have done us so much mischief; nay, our transgressions are multiplied, they are more numerous and more heinous than they have been formerly; look which way we will we cannot look off them, all places, all orders and degrees of men are infected; the sense of our transgression is with us, as David said, *my sin is ever before me*; it is too plain to be denied or concealed, too bad to be excused or palliated; God is a witness to them; they are multiplied before thee, in thy sight, under thine eye. We are witnesses against ourselves: as for our iniquities we know them, though we have foolishly endeavoured to cover them; nay, they themselves are witnesses, our sins stare us in the face and testify against us, so many have they been, and so deeply aggravated. (2.) They own the great evil and malignity there is in sin, in their sin, it is *transgression and lying against the Lord*, ver. 13. The sins of those that profess themselves God's people, and bear his name, are upon this account worse than the sins of others, that in transgressing they lie against the Lord, i. e. they falsely accuse him, they misrepresent and belie him, as if he had dealt hardly and unfairly with them; or they perfidiously break covenant with him, and falsify their most sacred and solemn engagements to him, that is *lying against him*; it is *departing away from our God*, to whom we are obliged as our's, and to whom we ought to cleave with purpose of heart; from him we have departed as the rebellious subject from his allegiance to his rightful prince, and the adulterous wife from the guide of her youth, and the covenant of her God. (3.) They own that there was a general decay of moral honesty, and it is not strange that those who were false to their God, are never faithful to one another. They spoke oppression, declared openly for that, though it was a revolt from their God, and a revolt from truth, by the sacred bonds of which we should always be tied and held fast. They conceived and uttered words of falsehood; many an ill thing is conceived in the mind, yet it is prudently stifled there, and not suffered to go any farther; but these sinners were so impudent, so daring, that whatever wickedness they conceived, they gave it an imprimatur, and made no difficulty of publishing it; to think an ill thing is bad, but to say it is much worse. Many a word of falsehood is uttered in haste for want of consideration, but these were conceived and uttered, were uttered deliberately and of malice prepenite. They were words of falsehood, and yet they are said to be uttered from the heart, because though they differed from the real sentiments of the heart, and therefore were words of falsehood, yet they agreed with the malice and wickedness of the heart, and were the natural language of that, it was a *double heart*, Psal. xii. 2. Those who by the grace of God kept themselves free from these enormous crimes, yet put themselves into the confession of sin, because members of that nation which was generally thus corrupted. (4.) They own that that was not done which might have been done to reform the land, and to amend what was amiss, ver. 14. Judgment that should go forward, and bear down the opposition that is made to it, that should run its course like a river, like a mighty stream, is turned away backward, a contrary course: the administration of justice is become but an umbrage to the greatest injustice; judgment that should check the proceedings of fraud and violence is driven back, and so they go on triumphantly. Justice stands afar off, even from our courts of judicature, which are so crowded with the patrons of oppression that equity cannot enter, cannot have admission into the court, cannot be heard, or at least shall not be heeded. Equity enters not into the unrighteous decrees which they decree, chap. x. 1. *Truth is fallen in the street*, and there it may lie to be trampled upon by every foot of pride, and she has never a friend that will lend a hand to help her up; yea, truth faileth in common conversation, and in dealing between man and man, so that one knows not whom to believe or whom to trust. (3.) They own that there was a prevailing enmity in men's minds to those that were good. He that doth evil goes unpunished, but he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey to those beasts of prey that were before described; it is crime enough with them for a man not to do as they did, and they treat him as an enemy that will not partake with them in their wickedness. He that is departed from evil is counted mad, so the margin reads it: sober singularity is branded as folly, and he is thought next door to a madman that swims against the stream that runs so strong. (6.) They own that all this could not but be very displeasing to the God of heaven. The evil was done in his sight; they knew very well, though they were not willing to acknowledge it, that the Lord saw it: though it was done secretly, and gilded over with specious pretences, yet it could not be concealed from his all-seeing eye; all the wickedness that is in the world is naked and open before the eyes of God: And as he is of quicker eyes than not to see iniquity, so he is of

purser eyes than to behold it with the least approbation or allowance: He saw it, and it displeased him, though it was among his own professing people that he saw it; it was evil in his eyes: he saw the sinfulness of all this sin, and that which was most offensive to him was, that there was no judgment, no reformation; had he seen any signs of that, though the sin displeased him, he would soon have been reconciled to the sinners upon their returning from their evil way. Then the sin of a nation becomes national, and brings public judgment, when it is not restrained by public justice.

16. ¶ And he saw that *there was no man*, and wondered that *there was no intercessor*: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. 17. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. 18. According to *their deeds*, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence. 19. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. 20. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. 21. As for me, this is my covenant with them saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD; from henceforth and for ever.

How sin abounded we have read to our great amazement in the former part of the chapter, how grace doth much more abound we read in these verses. And as sin took occasion from the commandment to become more exceeding sinful, so grace took occasion from the transgression of the commandment to appear more exceeding gracious. Observe,

1. Why God wrought salvation for this provoking people; notwithstanding their provocations; it was purely for his own name's sake: because there was nothing in them either to bring it about, or to induce him to bring it about for them; no merit to deserve it, no might to effect it, he would do it himself, would be exalted in his own strength, for his own glory. (1.) He took notice of their weakness and wickedness: he saw that there was no man that would do any thing for the support of the bleeding cause of religion and virtue among them, not a man that would execute judgment, Jer. v. 1. that would bestir himself in a work of reformation; those that complained of the badness of times, yet had not zeal or courage enough to appear and act against it; there was an universal corruption of manners, and nothing done to stem the tide; most were wicked, and those that were not so, yet were weak, and durst not attempt any thing in opposition to the wickedness of the wicked. There was no intercessor; either none to intercede with God, to stand in the gap, by prayer to turn away his wrath; it would have pleased him to be thus met, and he wondered that he was not; or rather none to interpose for the support of justice and truth, that were trampled upon and run down, ver. 14. no advocate to speak a good word for those that were made a prey of because they kept their integrity, ver. 15. They complained God did not appear for them, chap. lviii. 3. but God with much more reason complains that they did nothing for themselves; intimating how ready he would have been to do them good, if he had found among them the least motion towards a reformation. (2.) He engaged his own strength and righteousness for them; they shall be saved for all this; and,

1. Because they have no strength of their own, nor any active men that will set to it in good earnest, to redress the grievances either of their iniquities or of their calamities, therefore *his own arm shall bring salvation to him*, i. e. to his people, or to him whom he would raise up to be the deliverer, Christ the power of God, and arm of the Lord, that man of his right-hand whom he made strong for himself. The work of reformation, that is the first and principal article of the salvation, shall be wrought by the immediate influences of the divine grace on men's consciences. Since magistrates and societies for reformation fail of doing their part, one will not do justice, nor the other call for it, God will let them know he can do it without them, when his time is come thus to prepare his people for mercy. And then the work of deliverance shall be wrought by the immediate operations of the divine providence on men's affections and affairs. When God stirred up the Spirit of Cyrus, and brought his people out of Babylon, *not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, then his own arm brought salvation, which is never shortened.

2. Because they have no righteousness of their own to merit these favours, and to which God might have an eye in working for them, therefore his own righteousness it sustained him, and bore him out in it. Divine justice, which by their sins they had armed against them, through grace appears for them. Though they can expect no favour as due to them, yet he will be just to himself, to his own purpose, and promise, and covenant with his people: he will in righteousness punish the enemies of his people: see Deut. ix. 5. *Not for thy righteousness, but for the wickedness of these nations they are driven out*. In our redemption by Christ, since we had no righteousness of our own to produce, on which God might proceed in favour to us, he brought in a righteousness by the merit and mediation of his own Son, it is called *the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9. and this righteousness sustained him, and bore him out in all his favours to us, notwithstanding our provocations. *He put on righteousness as a breastplate*, securing his own honour, as a breastplate doth the vitals, in all his proceedings, by the justice and equity of them; and then he put *a helmet of salvation upon his head*; so sure is he to effect the salvation he intends, that he takes salvation itself for his helmet, which therefore must needs be impenetrable, and in which he appears very illustrious, formidable in the eyes of his enemies, and amiable in the eyes of his friends. When righteousness is his coat of arms, salvation is his crest. In allusion to this, among the pieces of a Christian's armour we find *the breastplate of righteousness*, and for a helmet, *the hope of salvation*, Eph. vi. 14—17. 1 Thess. v. 8. and it is called the armour of God, because he wore it first, and so fitted it for us.

3. Because they have no spirit or zeal to do any thing for themselves, God will put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and clothe himself with zeal as a cloke, i. e. he will make his justice upon the enemies of his church and people.

people, and his jealousy for his own glory and the honour of religion and virtue among men, to appear evident and conspicuous in the eye of the world; and in these he will shew himself great, as a man shews himself in his rich attire, or in the distinguishing habit of his office. If men be not zealous against sin, God will, and will take vengeance on it for all the injury it has done to his honour, and his people's welfare; and this was the business of Christ in the world, to take away sin, and be revenged on it.

2. What the salvation is, that shall be wrought out by the righteousness and strength of God himself.

1. There shall be a present temporal salvation wrought out for the Jews in Babylon, or elsewhere, in distress and captivity. This is promised, *ver. 18, 19.* as a type of something farther. When God's time is come he will do his own work, though those fail that should forward it. It is here promised,

(1.) That God will reckon with his enemies, and will render to them according to their deeds; to the enemies of his people abroad, that have oppressed them; to the enemies of justice and truth at home, that have oppressed them; for they are also God's enemies; and when the day of vengeance comes, he will deal with both as they have deserved; according to retribution, so the world is, the law of retributions, *Rev. xiii. 10.* or according to former retributions, as he has rendered to his enemies formerly, accordingly he will now repay *fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies*: his fury shall not exceed the rules of justice, as men's fury commonly doth. Even to the islands, that lie most remote, if they have appeared against him, he will repay recompence; for *his hand shall find out all his enemies*, *Pl. xxi. 8.* and his arrows reach them. Though God's people have carried themselves so ill that they do not deserve to be delivered, yet his enemies carry themselves so much worse that they do deserve to be destroyed.

(2.) That whatever attempts the enemies of God's people may afterwards make upon them to disturb their peace, they shall be baffled and brought to nought. *When the enemy shall come in like a flood, like a high spring-tide or a land-flood, which threaten to bear down all before them without controul, then the Spirit of the Lord, by some secret, undiscerned power shall lift up a standard against him, and so, as the margin reads it, put him to flight*: he that hath delivered will still deliver. When God's people are weak and helpless, and have no standard to lift up against the invading power, God will give a banner to them that fear him, *Plal. lx. 4.* will by his Spirit lift up a standard, which will draw multitudes together to appear on the church's behalf. Some read it, *He shall come* (i. e. the name of the Lord and his glory, before foreseen of the Messiah promised) *like a straight river, the Spirit of the Lord lifting him up for an ensign*. Christ, by the preaching of his gospel, shall cover the earth with the knowledge of God as with the waters of a flood, the Spirit of the Lord setting up Christ as a standard to the Gentiles, *Isa. xi. 10.*

(3.) That all this should redound to the glory of God, and the advancement of religion in the world, *ver. 19.* *So shall they fear the name of the Lord in his glory, in all nations that lie eastward or westward.* The deliverance of the Jews out of captivity, and the destruction brought on their oppressors, would awaken multitudes to enquire concerning the God of Israel, and induce them to serve and worship him, and lift themselves under the standard which the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up. God's appearance for his church shall occasion the accession of many to it. This had its full accomplishment in gospel times, when many came from the east and west to fill up the places of the children of the kingdom that shall be cast out; when there were set up eastern and western churches, *Matt. viii. 11.*

2. There shall be a more glorious salvation wrought out by the Messiah in the fulness of time, which salvation all the prophets, upon all occasions, had in view. We have here the two great promises relating to that salvation:

1. That the Son of God shall come to us to be our Redeemer, *ver. 20.* *Thy Redeemer shall come*; it is applied to Christ, *Rom. xi. 26.* *There shall come the Deliverer.* The coming of Christ as the Redeemer, is the summary of all the promises both of the Old and New Testament, and this was the redemption in Jerusalem which the believing Jews looked for, *Luke ii. 38.* Christ is our God, our next-kinfman, that redeems both the person and the estate of the poor debtor. Observe, (1.) The place where this Redeemer shall appear, he shall come to Zion, for there, on that holy hill, the Lord would set him up as his king, *Psal. ii. 6.* *In Zion the chief corner stone was to be laid*, *1 Pet. ii. 6.* *He came to his temple there*, *Mat. iii. 1.* there salvation was to be placed, *Isaiah xlv. 13.* for thence the law was to go forth, *Isaiah ii. 3.* Zion was a type of the gospel-church, for which the Redeemer acts in all his appearances; the Redeemer shall come for the sake of Zion, so the LXX. read it. (2.) The persons that shall have the comfort of the Redeemer's coming, that shall then lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh; he shall come to those that turn from ungodliness in Jacob, to those that are in Jacob; to the praying seed in Jacob, in answer to their prayers; yet not to all that are in Jacob, that are within the pale of the visible church, but to those only that turn from transgression, that repent, and reform, and forsake those sins which Christ came to redeem them from. The sinners in Zion will fare never the better for the Redeemer's coming to Zion, if they go on still in their trespasses.

2. That the Spirit of God shall come to us to be our sanctifier, *ver. 21.* In the Redeemer there was a new covenant made with us, a covenant of promises; and this is the great and comprehensive promise of that covenant. That God will give and continue his word and Spirit to his church and people throughout all generations. God's giving the Spirit to them that *affix him*, includes the giving them all good things, *Luke xi. 13.* *Matt. vii. 11.* This covenant is here said to be made with them, i. e. with them that turn from transgression; for they that cease to do evil shall be taught to do well: but the promise is made to a single person, *My Spirit that is upon thee*, being directed, either, (1.) To Christ as the head of the church, who received that he might give. The Spirit promised to the church was first upon him, and from his head that precious ointment descended to the skirts of his garments; and the word of the gospel was first put into his mouth; for it began to be spoken by the Lord. And all believers are his seed, in whom he prolongs his days, *Isaiah llii. 10.* Or, (2.) To the church; and so it is a promise of the continuance and perpetuity of the church in the world to the end of time, parallel to those promises, that the throne and seed of Christ shall endure for ever, *Psal. lxxxix. 29—36.*—*xxii. 30.* Observe, (1.) How the church shall be kept up; in a succession, as the world of mankind is kept up, by the seed and the seed's seed; as one generation passeth away, another generation shall come; *instead of the fathers shall be the children.* (2.) How long it shall be kept up; *from henceforth and for ever*, always even unto the end of the world; for the world being left to stand for the sake of the church, we may be sure that as long as it doth stand, Christ will have a church in it; though not always visible. (3.) By what means it shall be kept up; by the constant residence of the Word and Spirit in it: 1. The Spirit that was upon Christ shall always continue in the hearts of the faithful; there shall be some in every age on whom he shall work, and in whom he shall dwell; and thus the Comforter shall abide with the church for ever, *John xiv. 16.* 2. The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; i. e. there shall be some in every age who, *believing with the heart unto righteouf-*

ness, shall with the tongue make confession unto salvation. The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the church, for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ's holy language, and profess his holy religion. Observe, The Spirit and the word go together, and by them the church is kept up: for the words in the mouths of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us, unless the Spirit work with the word, and give us an understanding; but the Spirit doth his work by the word, and in concurrence with it; and whatever is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the Scriptures: On these foundations the church is built, stands firm, and shall stand for ever; Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

C H A P. LX.

This whole Chapter is all to the same purpose, all in the same strain; it is a part of God's covenant with his church, which is spoken of in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, and the blessings here promised are the fruits of the word and Spirit there promised. The long continuance of the church, even unto the utmost ages of time, was there promised; and here the large extent of the church, even unto the utmost regions of the earth; and both these tend to the honour of the Redeemer. It is here promised, (1.) That the church should be enlightened and shined upon, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) That it should be enlarged, and great additions made to it, to join with in the service of God, *ver. 3—5.* (3.) That the new converts should be greatly serviceable to the church and to the interests of it, *ver. 9—13.* (4.) That the church shall be in great honour and reputation among men, *ver. 14—16.* (5.) That it shall enjoy a profound peace and tranquility, *ver. 17—18.* (6.) That the members of it being all righteous, the glory and joy of it shall be everlasting, *ver. 19—22.* Now this has some reference to the peaceable and prosperous condition which the Jews were sometimes in, after their return out of captivity into their own land; but it certainly looks farther, and was to have its full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah. The enlargement of that kingdom by the bringing in of the Gentiles into it, and the spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ Jesus with which it should be enriched; and all these earnest of eternal joy and glory.

1. **A**RISE, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. 2. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. 3. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. 4. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. 5. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. 6. The multitude of camels shall cover thee: the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah: all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD. 7. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. 8. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

It is here promised that the gospel temple shall be very lightsome and very large.

1. It shall be very lightsome; *Thy light is come.* When the Jews returned out of captivity, they had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour; then they were made to know the Lord, and to rejoice in his goodness; and upon both accounts their light came. When the Redeemer came to Zion, he brought light with him, he himself came to be a light. Now observe, (1.) What this light is, and whence it springs; *The Lord shall arise upon thee*, *ver. 2.* i. e. the glory of the Lord, *ver. 1.* that shall be seen upon thee. God is the father and fountain of lights, and it is in his light that we shall see light. As far as we have the knowledge of God in us, and the favour of God towards us, our light is come. When God appears to us, and we have the comfort of his favour, then the glory of the Lord riseth upon us, as the morning light; when he appears for us, and we have the credit of his favour, when he shews us some token for good, and proclaims his favour to us, then his glory is seen upon us, as it was upon Israel in the pillar and cloud of fire. When Christ arose as the sun of righteousness, and in him the day-spring from on high hath visited us, then the glory of the Lord was seen upon us, the glory as of the first-begotten of the Father. (2.) What a soil there shall be to this light; *darkness shall cover the earth*; but though it be gross darkness, darkness that might be felt, like that of Egypt, that shall over-spread the people; yet the church, like Gothen, shall have light at the same time. When the case of the nations that have not the gospel shall be very melancholy, those dark corners of the earth being full of the habitations of cruelty to poor souls, the state of the church shall be very pleasant. (3.) What is the duty which the rising of this light calls for; *arise, shine*; not only receive this light, and (as the margin reads it) *be enlightened by it*, but reflect this light; *arise, and shine* with rays borrowed from it. The children of light ought to shine as lights in the world: if God's glory be seen upon us to our honour, we ought not only with our lips, but in our lives, to return the praise of it to his honour, *Matt. v. 16.* *Phil. ii. 15.*

2. It shall be very large: When the Jews were settled again in their own land, after their captivity, many of the people of the land joined themselves to them; but it doth not appear that there ever was any such numerous accession to them as would answer the fulness of this prophecy; and therefore we must conclude that this looks farther, to the bringing of the Gentiles into the gospel-church; not their flocking to one particular place, though under that type it is here described: There is no place now that is the center of the church's unity; but their flocking to Christ, and coming by faith, and hope, and holy love, into that society, which is incorporated by the charter of his gospel, and of the unity of which he only is the center; that family which is named from him, *Eph. iii. 15.* And the gospel-church is expressly called Zion and Jerusalem, and under that notion

all believers are said to come to it, *Heb. xii. 22. Ye are come unto mount Zion to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*; which serves for a key to this prophecy, *Eph. ii. 19. Observe*,

1. What shall invite such multitudes to the church; they shall come to thy light, and to the brightness of thy rising, *ver. 3.* They shall be allured to join themselves to thee, (1.) By the light that shines upon thee, the light of the glorious gospel, which the churches hold forth, and therefore are called golden candlesticks, this light which discovers so much of God and his good will to man, by which life and immortality are brought to light, this shall invite all the serious well-affected part of mankind to come and join themselves to the church, that they may have the benefit of this light, to inform them concerning truth and duty. (2.) By the light with which thou shinest; the purity and love of the primitive Christians, their heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, and patient sufferings, were the brightness of the church's rising, which drew many into it. The beauty of holiness was the powerful attractive by which Christ had a willing people brought to him in the day of his power, *Psal. cx. 3.*

2. What multitudes shall come to the church: great numbers shall come, *Gentiles, or nations of them that are saved*, as it is expressed with allusion to this, *Rev. xxi. 24. Nations shall be disciplined*, *Matt. xxviii. 19.* and even kings, men of figure, power, and influence shall be added to the church. They come from all parts, *ver. 4. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see them coming: devout men out of every nation under heaven*, *Acts ii. 4.* See how white the fields are already to the harvest, *John iv. 35.* See them coming in a body, as one man, and with one consent, they gathered themselves together, that they may strengthen one another's hands, and encourage one another; *Come and let us go*, *Isaiah 3.* They come from the remotest parts; they come to thee from far, having heard the report of thee, as the queen of Sheba, or *seen thy star in the east*, as the wise men, and they will not be discouraged by the length of the journey from coming to thee. There shall come some of both sexes, sons and daughters shall come in the most dutiful manner, as thy sons and thy daughters, resolved to be of thy family, to submit to the laws of thy family, and put themselves under the tuition of it: they shall come to be nursed at thy side; i. e. to have their education with thee from their cradle. The church's children must be nursed at her side, not sent out to be nursed among strangers; there where alone the sincere milk of the word is to be had must the church's new-born babes be nursed, that they may grow thereby, *1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.* They that would enjoy the dignities and privileges of Christ's family, must submit to the discipline of it.

3. What they shall bring with them, and what advantage shall accrue to the church by their accession to it: they that are brought into the church by the grace of God, will be sure to bring all they are worth in with them, which with themselves they will devote to the honour and service of God, and do good with in their places. (1.) The merchant, shall write holiness to the Lord, upon their merchandise and their hire, as *chap. xxiii. 18.* The abundance of the sea, either the wealth that is fetched out of the sea, the fish, the pearls, or that which is imported by sea, it shall all be converted to thee and to thy use; the wealth of the rich merchants shall be laid out in works of piety and charity. (2.) The mighty men of the nations shall employ their might in the service of the church; *The forces, or troops of the Gentiles shall come unto thee*, to guard thy coasts, strengthen thine interests, and if occasion be, to fight thy battles: the forces of the Gentiles had often been against the church, but now they shall be for it; for as God when he pleaseth can, and when we please him will, make even our enemies to be at peace with us, (*Prov. xvi. 7.*) so when Christ overcomes the strong man armed, he divides his spoils, and makes that to serve his interests which had been used against them, *Luke xi. 22.* (3.) The wealth imported by land carriage, as well as that by sea, shall be made use of in the service of God and the church, *ver. 6.* The camels and dromedaries, that bring gold and incense, gold to make the golden altar of, and incense and sweet perfumes to burn upon it; they of Media and Sheba shall bring the richest commodities of their country, not to trade with, but to honour God with; and not in small quantities, but camel-loads of them. This was in part fulfilled when the wise men of the east, perhaps some of the countries here mentioned, drawn by the brightness of the star, came to Christ, and presented to him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, *Matt. ii. 11.* (4.) Great numbers of sacrifices shall be brought to God's altar, acceptable sacrifices, and though brought by Gentiles they shall find acceptance, *ver. 7.* Kedar was famous for flocks, and it is likely the fattest rams were those of Nebaioth; they shall come up with acceptance on God's altar. God must be served and honoured with what we have, according as he hath blessed us, and with the best we have. This was fulfilled when, by the decree of Darius, the governors beyond the river, perhaps of some of these countries, were ordered to furnish the temple at Jerusalem, with bullocks, rams, and lambs, for the burnt-offering of the God of heaven, *Ezra vi. 9.* And it had a farther accomplishment, and we trust will have, in the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles unto God, *Rom. xv. 16.* The flocks and rams are precious souls; for they are said to minister to the church, and to come up as living sacrifices, presenting themselves to God by a reasonable service, on his altar, *Rom. xii. 1.*

4. How God shall be honoured by the increase of the church and the accession of such numbers to it: (1.) They shall intend the honour of God's name in it: when they bring their gold and incense, it shall not be to shew the riches of their country, or to gain applause to themselves for piety and devotion, but to shew forth the praises of the Lord, *ver. 6.* Our greatest services and gifts to the church are not acceptable farther than we have an eye to the glory of God in them: and this must be our business in our attendance on public ordinances, to give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; for therefore, as these here, we are called out of darkness into light, that we should shew forth the praises of him that called us, *1 Pet. ii. 9.* (2.) God will advance the honour of his own name by it; so he hath said, *ver. 7. I will glorify the house of my glory.* The church is the house of God's glory, where he manifests his glory to his people, and receives that homage by which they do honour to him: and it is for the glory of his house, and of him that keeps house there, both that the Gentiles shall bring their offerings to it, and that they should be accepted therein.

5. How the church shall herself be affected with this increase of her numbers, *ver. 5.* (1.) She shall be in transport of joy upon this account; *Thou shalt see and flow together, or flow to and fro, as in a pleasing toils about it, surprised at it, but extremely glad of it.* (2.) There shall be a mixture of fear with this joy; *thine heart shall fear*, doubting whether it be lawful to go in to the uncircumcised, and eat with them, Peter was so possessed with this fear, that he needed vision and voice from heaven to help him over it, *Acts x. 28.* But, (3.) When this fear is conquered, thy heart shall be enlarged in holy love, so enlarged that thou shalt have room in it for all the Gentile converts, thou shalt not have such a narrow soul as thou hast had, nor affections so confined within the Jewish pale. When God intends the beauty and prosperity of his church, he gives this largeness of heart, and an extensive charity. (4.) These converts flocking to the church shall

be mightily admired, *ver. 8. Who are these that fly as a cloud?* Observe, (1.) How the conversion of souls is here described; it is flying to Christ and to his church; for thither we are directed; it is flying like a cloud though in great multitudes, so as to overspread the heavens, yet with great unanimity, all as one cloud: they shall come with speed, as a cloud flying on the wings of the wind, and come openly, and in the view of all, *their very enemies beholding them*, *Rev. xi. 12.* and yet not be able to hinder them: they shall fly as a dove to their windows, in great flights, many together; they fly on the wings of the harmless dove, that flies low, noting their innocency and humility: they fly to Christ, to the church, to the word and ordinances, as doves, by instinct, to their own windows, to their own home; thither they fly for refuge and shelter when they are pursued by the birds of prey; and thither they fly for rest when they have been wandering and are weary, as Noah's dove to the ark. (2.) How the conversion of souls is here admired; it is spoken of both with wonder and pleasure; *Who are these?* we have reason to admire with wonder that so many flock to Christ, when we see them altogether we shall admire whence they all came; and we have reason to admire with pleasure and affection those that do flock to him; *Who are these?* how excellent, how aimable are they! what a pleasant sight it is to see poor souls hastening to Christ with a full resolution to abide with him!

9. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God: and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. 10. And the sons of strangers shall build up their walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour I have had mercy on thee. 11. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. 12. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. 13. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. 14. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee, shall bow themselves down at the soles of the feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

The promises made to the church in the foregoing verses, are here repeated, ratified, and enlarged upon; designed still for the comfort and encouragement of the Jews after their return out of captivity; but certainly looking farther to the enlargement and advancement of the gospel church, and the abundance of spiritual blessings with which it shall be enriched.

1. God will be very gracious and propitious to them: we must begin with that promise, because thence all the rest take rise. The sanctuary that was desolate then begins to be repaired, when God causeth his face to shine upon it, *Dan. ix. 17.* All the favour that the people of God find with men, is owing to the light of God's countenance and his favour to them, *ver. 10.* All shall now make court to thee, for in my wrath I smote thee, whilst thou wast in captivity; and the suffering of the church, especially by its corruptions, decays, and divisions (against which these promises here will be its relief) are sad tokens of God's displeasure; but now in my favour have I had mercy on thee, and therefore have all this mercy in store for thee.

2. Many shall be brought into the church, even from far countries, *ver. 9.* Surely the isles shall wait for me, shall welcome the gospel, and shall attend God with their praises for it, and their ready subjection to it. The ships of Tarshish, transport ships, shall lie ready to carry members from far distant regions to the church, or (which is equivalent) to carry the ministers of the church to remote parts to preach the gospel, and to bring in souls to join themselves to the Lord. Observe, (1.) Who are brought; thy sons, i. e. such as are designed to be so, those children of God that are scattered abroad, *John xi. 52.* (2.) What they shall bring with them; they live at such a distance that they cannot bring their flocks and their rams; but like those who live remote from Jerusalem, when they came up to worship at the feast, because they could not bring their tithes in species, turned it into money, they shall bring their silver and their gold with them. Note, when we give up ourselves to God, we must with ourselves give up all we have to him: if we honour him with our spirits, we will honour him with our substance. (3.) To whom they shall devote and dedicate themselves, and all they are worth; to the name of the Lord thy God, to God as the Lord of all, and the church's God and King, even to the Holy One of Israel, whom Israel worships as a Holy One, in the beauty of holiness; because he has glorified thee. Note, The honour God puts upon his church and people, should not only engage us to honour them, but invite us to join ourselves to them; *We will go with you, for God is with you*, *Zech. viii. 23.*

3. Those that come into the church shall be welcome; for so spacious is the holy city, that though, *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, yet still there is room.* Therefore thy gates shall be open continually, *ver. 11.* not only because thou hast no reason to fear thine enemies, but because thou hast reason to expect thy friends. And it is usual with us to leave our doors open, or leave some to be ready to open them all night, if we look for a child or a guest to come in late. Note, Christ is always ready to entertain those that come to him, is never out of the way, nor can they ever come unseasonably; the gate of mercy is always open, night and day, or shall soon be opened to them that knock. Ministers, the door-keepers, must be always ready to admit those that offer themselves to the Lord. God not only keeps a good house in his church, but he keeps open house; that at any time, by the preaching of the word, in season, and out of season, the forces of the Gentiles, and the kings or commanders of those forces, may be brought into the church. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and let such welcome guests as these come in.

4. All that are about the church shall be made some way or other serviceable to it. Though dominion is far from being founded in men's grace, it is founded in God's; and he that made the inferior creatures useful to man, will make the nations of men useful to the church; *The earth helped the woman: all things are for your sakes.* So here, *ver. 10.* Even the sons of

of strangers, that have neither knowledge of thee, nor kindness for thee, that have always been *aliens to the common wealth of Israel*, even they shall *build up thy wall, and their kings shall in that and other things minister unto thee*, and not think it any disparagement to them. This was fulfilled when the king of Persia, and the governors of the provinces, by his order, were aiding and assisting Nehemiah in building the wall about Jerusalem. Rather than Jerusalem's walls shall lie still in ruins, the *sons of the stranger* shall be raised up to build them. Even those that do not belong to the church yet may be a protection to it. And the greatest of men should not think it below them to minister to the church, but rejoice that they are in a capacity, and have a heart to do it any service. Nay, it is the duty of all to do what they can in their places to advance the interest of God's kingdom among men; it is at their peril if they do not; for *ver. 12. The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish*; not that they must perish by the sword; or thine anathemas; or as if this gave any countenance to the using of external force for the propagating of the gospel; or as if men might be compelled by penalties and punishments to come into the church; by no means. But those that will not by faith submit to Jesus Christ, the king of the church, and serve him, they shall perish eternally, *Psal. ii. 12. They that will not be subject to Christ's golden scepter, to the government of his word and spirit, that will not be brought under, or kept in by the discipline of his family, shall be broken in pieces by his iron rod; Bring them forth, and stay them before me*, Luke xix. 27. Nations of such shall be entirely and eternally wasted, when Christ comes to take vengeance on those that *obey not his gospel*, 2 Thess. i. 8.

5. There shall be abundance of beauty added to the ordinances of divine worship, *ver. 13. The glory of Lebanon*, the strong and stately cedars that grow there, *shall come unto thee*, as of old to Solomon, when he built the temple, 2 Chron. ii. 16, and with them other timber proper for the carved work thereof, which the enemy had broken down, *Psal. lxxiv. 5, 6. The temple, the place of God's sanctuary*, shall not only be rebuilt, but beautified. It is the *place of his feet*, where he rests and resides, *Ezek. xliii. 7. the ark is called his foot-stool*, because it was under the mercy-seat, *Psal. cxxxii. 7. This he will make glorious in the eyes of his people, and of all their neighbours. The glory of the latter house*, to which this refers, though in many instances inferior, yet was really greater than the glory of the former, because Christ came to that temple, *Mat. iii. 1. It was likewise adorned with goodly stones and gifts*, Luke xxi. 5. to which this promise may have some reference; yet so slightly did Christ speak of them there, that we must suppose it to have its full accomplishment in the beauties of holiness, and graces and comforts of the spirit with which the gospel ordinances are adorned and enriched.

6. The church shall appear truly great and honourable, *ver. 14. The people of the Jews after their return out of captivity, by degrees became more considerable, and made a better figure than one would have expected, after they had been so much reduced, and than any of the other nations recovered, that had been in like manner humbled by the Chaldeans. It is probable, many of those who had oppressed them in Babylon, when they were themselves driven out by the Persians, made their court to the Jews for shelter and supply; and were willing to scrape acquaintance with them. It is farther fulfilled, when those that have been enemies to the church are wrought upon by the grace of God to see their error, and come and join themselves to it. The sons of them that afflicted thee, if not they themselves, yet their children shall truckle to thee, shall beg pardon for their folly, and beg an interest in thy favour, and admission into thy family, 1 Sam. ii. 36. A promise like that is made to the church of Philadelphia, Rev. iii. 9. And it is intended to be, (1.) A mortification to the proud oppressors of the church, that have afflicted her, and despised her, and took a pleasure in doing it; they shall be brought down, their spirits shall be broken, and their condition shall be so mean and miserable, that they shall be glad to be obliged to those whom they have most studied to oblige. Note, Sooner or later God will pour contempt upon those that put contempt upon his people. (2.) An exaltation to the poor oppressed ones of the church; and this is the honour that shall be done them, they shall have an opportunity of doing good to those who have done evil to them, and saving those alive that have afflicted and despised them. It is a pleasure to a good man, and he accounts it an honour to shew mercy to those with whom he has found no mercy. Yet this is not all, they shall not only become supplicants to thee for their own interest, but they shall give honour to thee; they shall call thee, *The city of the Lord*; they shall at length be convinced that thou art a favourite of heaven, and the particular care of the divine providence. That city is truly great and honourable, it is strong, it is rich, it is safe, it is beautiful, it is the most desirable place that can be to live in, which is the city of the Lord, which he owns, in which he dwells, in which religion is uppermost; such a one is Zion, it is the place which God has chosen to put his name there, it is the *Zion of the Holy One of Israel*; therefore we may be sure a holy city, else the Holy One of Israel would never be called the patron of it.*

15. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. 16. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shall suck the breasts of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. 17. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. 18. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. 19. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God the glory. 20. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. 21. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. 22. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

The happy and glorious state of the church is here farther foretold, Vol. II. No. CXVIII.*

referring principally and ultimately to the Christian church, and the spiritual peace of that; but under the type of that little gleam of outward peace, which the Jews sometimes enjoyed after their return out of captivity. This is here spoken of.

1. As compared with what it had been; this made her peace and honour the more pleasant, that her condition had been much otherwise.

1. She had been despised, but now she should be honoured, *ver. 15, 16. Jerusalem had been forsaken and hated, abandoned by her friends, abhorred by her enemies, no man went through that desolate city, but declined it as a rueful spectacle; it was an astonishment and a hissing. But now it shall be made an eternal excellency, being reformed from idolatry, and having recovered the tokens of God's favour, and it shall be the joy of good people for many generations. Yet considering how short Jerusalem's excellency was, and how short it came of the vast compass of this promise, we must look for the full accomplishment of it in the perpetual excellencies of the gospel church, far exceeding those of the Old Testament church, and the glorious privileges and advantages of the Christian religion, which are indeed the joy of many generations.*

Two things are here spoken of as her excellency and joy, in opposition to her having been forsaken and hated. (1.) She shall find herself countenanced by her neighbours. The nations and their kings that are brought to embrace Christianity, shall lay themselves out for the good of the church, and maintain its interests, with the tenderness and affection that the nurse shews to the child at her breast, *ver. 16. Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles*; not suck their blood, that is not the spirit of the gospel; thou shalt suck the breasts of kings, which shall be to thee as nursing fathers. (2.) She shall find herself countenanced by her God; that shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer; shalt know it by experience, for such a salvation, such a redemption shall be wrought out for thee, as plainly discovers itself to be the work of the Lord, the work of a Mighty One, for it is a great salvation; of the *Mighty One of Jacob*, for it secures the welfare of all those that are Israelites indeed. They before knew the Lord to be their God, now they know him to be their Saviour, their Redeemer. Their Holy One now appears their Mighty One.

2. She had been impoverished, but now shall be enriched, and every thing shall be changed for the better with her, *ver. 17. When those who were raised out of the dust are set among princes, instead of brass money in their purses they have gold, and silver vessels in their houses instead of iron ones, and other improvements agreeable: so much shall the spiritual glory of the New Testament church exceed the external pomp and splendor of the Jewish economy, which had no glory in comparison with that which quite exceeds it, 2 Cor. iii. 10. When we had baptism in the room of circumcision, the Lord's supper in the room of the passover, and a gospel ministry in the room of a Levitical priesthood, we had gold instead of brass. Sin turned gold into brass, when Rehoboam made brasen shields instead of the golden ones he had pawned; but God's favour, when that returns, will turn brass again into gold.*

3. She had been oppressed by her own princes, which was sadly complained of, not only as her sin, but as her misery, *chap. lix. 14. But now all the grievances of that kind shall be redressed, ver. 17. I will make thine officers peace*; men of peace shall be made officers, and shall be indeed justices, not patrons of injustice, and justices of peace, not instruments of trouble and vexation. They shall be peace, i. e. they shall sincerely seek thy welfare, and by their means thou shalt enjoy good. They shall be peace, for they shall be righteousness; and then the peace is as a river, when the righteousness is as the waves of the sea. Even exactors, whose business it is to demand the public tribute, though they be exact must not be exacting, but must be just to the subject as well as to the prince, and according to the instructions John Baptist gave to the publicans, *must exact no more than is appointed them*, Luke xiii. 13.

4. She had been insulted by her neighbours, invaded, spoiled and plundered; but now it shall be so no more, *ver. 18. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land*, neither the threats and triumphs of those that do violence, nor the out-cries and complaints of those that suffer violence, shall again be heard, but every man shall peaceably enjoy his own. There shall be no wasting or destruction, either of persons or possessions, any where within thy borders, but thy walls shall be called Salvation, they shall be safe, and means of safety to thee; and thy gates shall be Praise, praise to thee, every one shall commend thee for the good condition they are kept in; and praise to thy God, who strengthens the bars of thy gates, *Psal. cxlvii. 13. When God's salvation is upon the walls, it is fit his praises should be in the gates, the places of concourse.*

2. As completed in what it shall be: it should seem that in the close of this chapter, we are directed to look farther yet, as far forward as to the glory and happiness of heaven, under the type and figure of the flourishing state of the church on earth, which yet was never such as to come to any thing near to what is here foretold; and divers of the images and expressions here made use of we find in the descriptions of the new Jerusalem, *Rev. xxi. 23—xxii. 5. As the prophets sometimes insensibly pass from the blessings of the Jewish church to the spiritual blessings of the Christian church, which are eternal; so sometimes they rise from the church militant to the church triumphant, where, and where only, all the promised peace, and joy, and honour, will be in perfection.*

1. God shall be all in all the happiness here promised; so he is always to true believers, *ver. 19. The sun and the moon shall be no more thy light, i. e. God's people, when they enjoy his favour, and walk in the light of his countenance, make little account of sun and moon, and other lights of this world, but could walk comfortably in the light of the Lord, though they should withdraw their shining. In heaven there shall be no occasion for sun or moon, for it is the inheritance of the saints in light, such light as will swallow up the light of the sun, as easily as the sun doth that of a candle. Idolaters worshipped the sun and moon, which some have thought the most ancient and plausible idolatry; but those shall be no more thy light, shall no more be idolized; but the Lord shall be to thee a constant light, both day and night, in the night of adversity, as well as in the day of prosperity. Those that make God their only light, shall have him their all-sufficient light; their sun and shield, thy God, thy glory. Note, God is the glory of those whose God he is, and will be so to eternity. It is their glory that they have him for their God, and they glory in it: it is to them instead of beauty, God's people are upon this account an honourable people, that they have an interest in God as their's in covenant.*

2. Happiness here promised shall know no change, period, or allay; *ver. 20. The sun shall no more go down*, but it shall be eternal day, eternal sun-shine with thee; that shall not be thy sun which is sometimes eclipsed, often clouded; and let it shine never so bright, never so warm, will certainly set, and leave thee in the dark, in the cold, in a few hours; but he shall be a sun, a fountain of light to thee, who is himself the Father of all lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning, *James i. 17. We read of the sun's standing still once, and not having to go down for the space of a day, and it was a glorious day, never was the like; but what was that to the day that shall never have a night? Or if it had, it should be a light night; for neither shall the moon withdraw itself, it shall never wane, shall never change, but be always at the full. The comforts and joy*

that are in heaven; the glories provided for the soul, as the light of the sun, and those prepared for the glorified body too, as the light of the moon, shall never know the least cessation or interruption, how should they, when the Lord shall himself be thine everlasting light? A light which never wastes nor can ever be extinguished. And the days of thy mourning shall be ended, so as never to return; for all tears shall be wiped away, and the fountains of them, sin and affliction dried up, so that sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever.

3. Those that are entitled to this happiness being duly prepared and qualified for it, shall never be put out of the possession of it, ver. 21. *Thy people, that shall inhabit this New Jerusalem, shall all be righteous, all justified by the righteousness of the Messiah, all sanctified by his Spirit, all who people that Jerusalem, must be righteousness, must have that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.* They are all righteous, for we know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. There are no people on earth that are all righteous; there is a mixture of some bad in the best societies on this side heaven; but there are no mixtures there. They shall be all righteous; i. e. they shall be entirely righteous, as there shall be none corrupt among them, so there shall be no corruption in them; the spirit of just men shall there be made perfect. And there shall be all the righteous together, that shall replenish the New Jerusalem; it is called the congregation of the righteous, Psalm i. 5. and because they are all righteous, therefore they shall inherit the land for ever, for nothing but sin can turn them out of it. The perfection of the saint's holiness secures the perpetuity of their happiness.

4. The glory of the church shall rebound to the honour of the church's God; they shall appear to be the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, and I will own them as such. It was by the grace of God that they were designed to this happiness; they are the branch of his planting, or of his plantations; he broke them off from the wild olive, and grafted them into the good olive; transplanted them out of the field, when they were as tender branches, into his nursery; that being now planted in his garden on earth, they might shortly be removed to his paradise in heaven. It was by his grace likewise that they were prepared and fitted for this happiness; they are the work of his hands, Eph. ii. 10. are wrought to the self-same thing, 2 Cor. v. 5. It is a work of time, and when it shall be finished will appear a work of wonder; and God will be glorified, who begun it and carried it on; for the Lord Jesus will then be admired in all them that believe: God will glorify himself in glorifying his chosen.

5. They will appear the more glorious, and God will be the more glorified in them, if we compare what they are with what they were; the happiness they are arrived to with the smallness of their beginnings, ver. 22. *A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation.* The captives that returned out of Babylon strangely multiplied and became a strong nation. The Christian church was a little one, a very small one at first, the number of their names was once but one hundred and twenty; yet it became a thousand; the stone cut out of the mountain without hands swelled so as to fill the earth. The triumphant church, and every glorified saint will be thousand out of a little one, and a strong nation out of a small one. The grace and peace of the saint, which was at first like a grain of mustard-seed, but it increaseth and multiplieth, and makes a little one to become a thousand, the weak to be as David; when they come to heaven, and look back upon the smallness of their beginning, they will wonder how they got thither. And so wonderful is all this promise, that it needed the ratification with which it is closed; *I the Lord will hasten it in his time.* All that is here said relating to the Jewish and Christian church, to the militant and triumphant church, and to every particular believer. (1.) It may seem too difficult to be brought about, and therefore may be despaired of; but the God of almighty power hath undertaken it. *I the Lord will do it*, who can do it, and who have determined to do it; it will be done by him whose power is irresistible, and his purposes unalterable. (2.) It may seem to be delayed, and put off so long that we are out of hopes of it; but as the Lord will do it, so he will hasten it, will do it with all convenient speed, though much time may be passed before it is done, no time shall be lost; he will hasten it in its time, in the proper time, in the season wherein it will be beautiful; he will do it in the time appointed by his wisdom, though not in the time prescribed by our folly. And this is really hastening it; for though it seem to tarry, it doth not tarry if it come in God's time, for we are sure that is the best time, which he that believes will patiently wait for.

C H A P. LXI.

In this chapter, (1.) We are sure to find the grace of Christ, published by himself to a lost world in the everlasting gospel, under the type and figure of *Isaiah's province*, which was to forestel the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, ver. 1—3. (2.) We think we find the glories of the church of Christ, its spiritual glories, described under the type and figure of the Jews prosperity after their return out of their captivity. (1.) It is promised that the decays of the church shall be repaired, ver. 4. (2.) That those from without shall be made serviceable to the church, ver. 5. (3.) That the church shall be a royal priesthood, maintained by the riches of the Gentiles, ver. 6. (4.) That she shall have honour and joy in lieu of all her shame and sorrow, ver. 7. (5.) That her affairs shall prosper, ver. 8. (6.) That prosperity shall enjoy these blessings, ver. 9. (7.) That righteousness and salvation shall be the eternal matter of the church's rejoicing and thanksgiving, ver. 10. 11. If the Jewish church was ever thus blessed, much more shall the Christian church be so, and all that belong to it.

1. **T**HE Spirit of the LORD God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2. To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn: 3. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

He that is the best expositor of scripture has no doubt given us the best exposition of these verses, even our Lord Jesus himself, who read this in the Synagogue at Nazareth (perhaps it was the lesson for the day) and ap-

plied it entirely to himself, saying, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*, Luke iv. 17, 18—21. And the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth in the opening of this text were admired by all that heard them. As *Isaiah* was authorized and directed to proclaim liberty to the Jews in Babylon, so was Christ, God's messenger, to publish a more joyful jubilee to a lost world. And here we are told,

1. How he was fitted and qualified for this work; *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me*, ver. 1. The prophets had the Spirit of God moving them at times, both instructing them what to say, and exciting them to say it; but Christ had the Spirit always resting on him without measure; but to the same intent that the prophets had, as a Spirit of counsel, and a Spirit of courage, *Isa. xi. 1, 2, 3.* When he entered upon the execution of his prophetic office, the Spirit, as a dove, descended upon him, Matt. iii. 16. This Spirit which was upon him, he communicated to those whom he sent to proclaim the same glad tidings, saying to them, when he gave them their commission, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*; thereby ratifying it.

2. How he was appointed and ordained to it; *The Spirit of God is upon me, because the Lord God hath anointed me.* What service God called him to, he furnished him for; therefore gave him his Spirit, because he had by a sacred and solemn unction set him apart to this great office, as kings and priests were of old destined to their offices by anointing. Hence the Redeemer was called the Messiah, the Christ, because he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. *He hath sent me*; our Lord Jesus did not go unsent, he had a commission from him that is the fountain of power: *The Father sent him, and gave him commandment.* This is a great satisfaction to us, that whatever Christ said, he had a warrant from heaven for; his doctrine was not his, but his that sent him.

3. What the work was, to which he was appointed, and ordained, 1. He was to be a preacher, was to execute the office of a prophet. So well-pleased was he with the good-will God shewed towards men through him, that he would himself be a preacher of it; that an honour might thereby be put upon the ministry of the gospel, and the faith of the saints might be confirmed and encouraged. He must preach good tidings, (so gospel signifies) to the meek, to the penitent, and humble, and poor in spirit; to the tidings of a Redeemer will be indeed good tidings, pure gospel; faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance. The poor are commonly best disposed to receive the gospel, Jam. ii. 5. and then it is likely to profit us when it is received with meekness, as it ought to be; to such Christ preached good tidings when he said, *Blessed are the meek.*

2. He was to be a healer, was sent to bind up the broken hearted, as pained limbs are rolled to give them ease, as broken bones and bleeding wounds are bound up, that they may knit and close again. Those whose hearts are broken for sin, that are truly humbled under the sense of guilt and dread of wrath, are furnished with the gospel of Christ with that which will make them easy and silence their fears. Those only who have experienced the pains of a penitential contrition, may expect the pleasure of divine cordials and consolations.

3. He was to be a deliverer; he was sent as a prophet to preach, as a priest to heal, and as a king to issue out proclamations; and those of two kinds;

(1.) Proclamation of peace to his friends; he shall proclaim liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did to the Jews in captivity, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Whereas by the guilt of sin we are bound over to the justice of God, are his lawful captives, *held for sin till payment be made of that great debt*; Christ lets us know that he has made satisfaction to divine justice for that debt, that his satisfaction is accepted, and if we will plead that and depend upon it, and make over ourselves and all we have to him, in a grateful sense of the kindness he hath done us, we may by faith sue out our pardon, and take the comfort of it; there is and shall be no condemnation to us. And whereas by the dominion of sin in us we are bound under the power of Satan, sold under sin, Christ lets us know that he hath conquered Satan, hath destroyed him that hath the power of death, and his works, and provided for us grace sufficient, to enable us to shake off the yoke of sin, and to loose ourselves from those bands of our neck. *The son is ready by his Spirit to make us free*, and then we shall be free indeed; not only discharged from the milleries of captivity, but advanced to all the immunities and dignities of citizens. This is the gospel proclamation, and it is like the blowing of the jubilee trumpet, which proclaimed the great year of release, Lev. xxv. 9—10, in allusion to which it is called the acceptable year of the Lord; the time of our acceptance with God, which is the original of our liberties: or it is called the year of the Lord, because it publisheth his free grace to his own glory, and an acceptable year, because it brings glad tidings to us, and what cannot but be very acceptable to those who know the capacities and necessities of their own souls.

(2.) Proclamation of war against his enemies. Christ proclaims the day of vengeance of our God; the vengeance he takes (1.) On sin and Satan, death and hell, and all the powers of darkness, that were to be destroyed in order to our deliverance; these Christ triumphed over in his cross, having spoiled and weakened them, shamed them, and made a show of them openly, and therein took vengeance on them for all injury they had done both to God and man, Col. ii. 15. (2.) On those of the children of men that stand in out against these fair offers; they shall not only be left as they deserve in their captivity, but be dealt with as enemies; we have the gospel summed up, Mark xvi. 16. where that part of it, *He that believes shall be saved* proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord to those that will accept of it; but the other part, *He that believes not shall be damned*, proclaims the day of vengeance of our God, that vengeance which he will take on those that obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, 2 Thess. i. 8.

4. He was to be a comforter, and so he is as preacher, healer, and deliverer; he is sent to comfort all that mourn, and mourning seek to him, and not to the world for comfort. Christ not only provides comfort for them, and proclaims it, but he applies it to them: he doth by his Spirit comfort them. There is enough in him to comfort all that mourn, whatever their fore or sorrow is; but this comfort is sure to them that mourn in Zion, i. e. that sorrow after a godly sort, according to God, for his residence is in Zion that mourn because of Zion's calamities and desolations, and mingle their tears by a holy sympathy with those of all God's suffering people, though they themselves are not in trouble; such tears God has a bottle for, Psal. lvi. 8, such mourners he has comfort in store for. As blessings out of Zion are spiritual blessings, so mourners in Zion are holy mourners; such as carry their sorrows to the throne of grace (for in Zion was the mercy seat) and pour them out as Hannah did before the Lord. To such as these Christ hath appointed by his gospel, and will give by his Spirit (ver. 3.) those consolations which will not only support them under their sorrows, but turn them into songs of praise. He will give them, (1.) Beauty for ashes; whereas they lay in ashes, as it was usual in times of great mourning, they shall not only be raised out of their dust, but be made to look pleasant. Note, The holy cheerfulness of Christians is their beauty, and a great ornament to their profession. Here is an elegant *paronomasia* in the original, he will give them *phcer*, beauty for *epher*, ashes; he will turn their sorrow into joy, as quickly and as easily as you can transpose a letter; for he speaks and it is done.

done. (2.) The oil of joy, which makes the face to shine, instead of mourning, which disfigures the countenance, and makes it unlovely. This oil of joy the saints have from that oil of gladness with which Christ himself was anointed above his fellows, Heb. i. 9. (3.) The garment of praise, such beautiful garments as were worn on thanksgiving days, instead of the spirit of heaviness, dimness, or contradiction; open joys for secret mournings; the spirit of heaviness they keep to themselves. Zion's mourners weep in secret, but the joy they are recompensed with, they are clothed with as with a garment in the eyes of others. Observe, Where God gives the oil of joy he gives the garment of praise: Those comforts which come from God, dispose the heart to, and enlarge the heart in, thanksgivings to God. Whatever we have the joy of, God must have the praise and glory of.

5. He was to be a planter; for the church is God's husbandry: Therefore he will do all this for his people, will cure their wounds, release them out of bondage, and comfort them in their sorrows, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that they might be so, and be acknowledged to be so; that they may be ornaments to God's vineyard, and may be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, as the branches of God's planting, chap. lx. 21. All that Christ doth for us is to make us God's people, and some way serviceable to him as living trees planted in the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the courts of our God. And all this that he may be glorified: i. e. that we may be brought to glorify him by a sincere devotion, and an exemplary conversation; for herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit; and that others also may take occasion from God's favour shining on his people, and his grace shining in them, to praise him: and that he might be for ever glorified in his saints.

4. ¶ And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. 5. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and your vine-dressers. 6. But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. 7. ¶ For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them. 8. For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. 9. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.

Promises are here made to the Jews now returned out of captivity, and settled again in their own land, which are to be extended to the gospel church, and all believers, who through grace are delivered out of spiritual thralldom; for they are capable of being spiritually applied.

3. It is promised that their houses shall be rebuilt, ver. 4. that their cities should be raised out of the ruins in which they had long lain, and should be fitted up for their use again. They shall build the old wastes, i. e. the old wastes shall be built, the waste cities shall be repaired, the former desolations even the desolations of many generations, which it was feared would never be repaired, shall be raised up. The setting up of Christianity in the world repaired the decays of natural religion, and raised up those desolations both of piety and honesty, which had been for many generations the reproach of mankind. An un sanctified soul is like a city that is broken down and has no walls, like a house in ruins: or by the power of Christ's gospel and grace it is repaired, it is put in order again, and fitted to be a habitation of God through the spirit. And they shall do this; they that are released out of captivity; for we are brought out of the house of bondage, that we may serve God, both in building up ourselves to his glory, and helping to build up his church on earth.

2. They that were so lately servants themselves, working for their oppressors and lying at their mercy, shall now have servants to do their work for them, and be at their command; not of their brethren, they are all the Lord's freemen, but of the strangers, and the sons of the alien, who shall keep their sheep, till their ground, and dress their gardens, the ancient employments of Abel, Cain, and Adam. Strangers shall feed your flocks, ver. 5. when by the grace of God we attain to a holy indifference as to all the affairs of this world, buying as though we possessed not; when, though our hands are employed about them, our hearts are not entangled with them, but reserved entire for God and his service, then the sons of the alien are our ploughmen and vine-dressers.

3. They shall not only be released out of their captivity, but highly preferred and honourably employed, ver. 6. While the strangers are keeping your flocks, you shall be keeping the charge of the sanctuary; instead of being slaves to your task-masters, you shall be named the priests of the Lord, a high and holy calling; priests were prince's peers, and in Hebrew were called by the same name: You shall be the ministers of our God, as the Levites were. Note, Those whom God sets at liberty, he sets to work: He delivers them out of the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him, Luke i. 74, 75. Psal. cxvi. 16. But his service is perfect freedom, nay it is the greatest honour. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he took them to be to him a kingdom of priests, Exod. xix. 5. And the gospel church is a royal priesthood, 1 Pet. ii. 9. All believers are made to our God kings and priests; and they ought to carry themselves so in their devotions and in their whole conversation, with holiness to the Lord written upon their foreheads, that men may call them the priests of the Lord.

4. The wealth and honour of the Gentile converts shall redound to the benefit and credit to the church, ver. 6. The Gentiles shall be brought into the church, those that were strangers shall become fellow-citizens with the saints, and with themselves they shall bring all they have, to be devoted to the glory of God, and used in his service; and the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall have the advantage of it. It will be a great strengthening and quickening, as well as a comfort and encouragement to all good Christians, to see the Gentiles serving the interest of God's kingdom. (1.) They shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, not which they have themselves seized by violence, but which is fairly and honourably presented to them, as gifts brought to the altar, which the priests and their families lived comfortably upon. It is not said, Ye shall hoard the riches of the Gentiles, and treasure it, but eat it; for there is nothing better in riches than to use them and to do good with them. (2.) They shall boast themselves in their glory: Whatever was the honour of the Gentile converts before their con-

version, their nobility, estates, learning, virtue, or places of trust and power, it shall all turn to the reputation of the church to which they have joined themselves; and whatever is their glory after their conversion, their holy zeal, and strictness of conversation, their usefulness, their patient suffering, and all the instances of that blessed change which divine grace hath made in them, shall be very much for the glory of God, and therefore all good men shall glory in it.

5. They shall have abundance of comfort and satisfaction in their own bosoms, ver. 7. The Jews no doubt had so after their return: they were in a new world, and now knew how to value liberty and property, the pleasures of which were continually fresh and blooming: And much more do all those rejoice whom Christ hath brought into the glorious liberty of God's children, especially when the privileges of their adoption shall be completed in the resurrection of the body. (1.) They shall rejoice in their portion: they shall not only have their own again, but, (which is a farther gift of God) they shall have the comfort of it, and a heart to rejoice in it, Eccles. iii. 13. Though the houses of the returned Jews, as well as their temple, be much inferior to what they were before the captivity, yet they shall be well pleased with them and thankful for them: It is a portion in their land, their own land, the holy land, Immanuel's land, and therefore they shall rejoice in it, having so lately known what it was to be strangers in a strange land. They that have God and heaven for their portion, have reason to say they have a worthy portion, and to rejoice in it. (2.) Everlasting joy shall be unto them, i. e. a joyful state of their people, which shall last long, much longer than the captivity had lasted: yet that joy of the Jewish nation was so much allayed, so often interrupted, and so soon brought to an end, that we must look for the accomplishment of this promise in the spiritual joy which believers have in God, and the eternal joy they hope for in heaven. (3.) This shall be a double recompense to them, and more than double, for all the reproach and vexation they have lain under in the land of their captivity; For your shame you shall have double honour; and in your land you shall possess double wealth to what you lost; the blessing of God upon it, and the comfort you shall have in it, shall make an abundant reparation for all the damages you have received: You shall not only be owned as God's Son, but as his first-born, (Exod. iv. 22.) and therefore intitled to a double portion. As the miseries of their captivity were so great, that in them they are said to have received double for their sins, chap. xl. 2. the joys of their return shall be so great, that in them they shall receive double for all their shame: The former is applicable to the fulness of Christ's satisfaction, in which God received double for all our sins; the latter is the fulness of heaven's joys, in which we shall receive more than double for all our services and sufferings. Job's case illustrates this: when God turned again his captivity he gave him twice as much as he had before.

6. God will be their faithful guide, and a God in covenant with them, ver. 8. I will direct their work in truth. God by his providence will order his affairs for the best, according to the word of his truth; he will guide them in the ways of true prosperity, by the rules of true policy; he will by his grace direct the works of good people in the right way, the true way that leads to happiness; he will direct them to be done in sincerity, and then they are pleasing to him: God desires truth in the inward parts, and if we do our works in truth he will make an everlasting covenant with us; for to those that walk before him and are upright, he will certainly be a God all-sufficient. Now as a reason both of this and of the foregoing promise, that God will recompense to them double for their shame, those words come in the former part of the verse, I the Lord have judgment: He loves that judgment should be done among men, both between magistrates and subjects, and between neighbour and neighbour, and therefore he hates all injustice: and when wrongs are done to his people by their oppressors and persecutors he is displeased with them, not only because they are done to his people, but because they are wrong, and against the eternal rules of equity: but if men do not do justice, he loves to do judgment himself in righting them that suffer wrong, and punishing them that do it: God pleads his people's injured cause not only because he is jealous for them, but because he is jealous for justice. To illustrate this it is added, that he hates robbery for burnt offering; he hates injustice even in his own people, that honour him with what they have in their burnt-offering to himself, much more doth he hate it when it is against his own people; if he hates robbery when it is for burnt-offering to himself, much more when it is for burnt-offerings to idols, and when not only his people are robbed of their estates, but he is robbed of his offerings. It is a truth much to the honour of God; that ritual services will never atone for the violation of moral precepts, nor will it justify any man's robbery to say, it was for burnt offerings; or curban, it is a gift; behold; to obey is better than sacrifice, to do justly and love mercy better than thousands of rams; nay, that robbery is most hateful to God of all others which is covered with this pretence, for it makes the righteous God to be the pattern of unrighteousness. Some make this a reason of the rejection of the Jews upon the bringing in of the Gentiles, ver. 6. because they were so corrupt in their morals, and while they tithed mint and cummin, made nothing of judgment and mercy, Matt. xxiii. 23. whereas God loves judgment, and insists upon that; and he hates both robbery for burnt offerings, and burnt offerings for robbery too, as that of the pharisees who made long prayers that they might the more plausibly devour widows houses. Others read these words thus, I hate rapine by iniquity, i. e. the spoil which the enemies of God's people have unjustly made of them: this God hated, and therefore would reckon with them for it.

7. God will entail a blessing upon their posterity after them, ver. 9. Their seed, i. e. the children of these persons themselves are now the blessed of the Lord, or their successors in their profession, the church's seed, shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation, Psal. xxii. 30. (1.) They shall signalize themselves, and make their neighbours to take notice of them, they shall be known among the Gentiles; shall distinguish themselves by the gravity, seriousness, humility, and cheerfulness of their conversation, especially by that brotherly love by which all men shall know them to be Christ's disciples; and they thus distinguishing themselves, God shall dignify them, by making them the blessings of their age and instruments of his glory; and by giving them remarkable tokens of his favour, which shall make them eminent, and gain them respect from all about them. Let the children of godly parents live in such a manner as that they may be known to be so, that all who observe them may see in them the fruits of a good education, and an answer to the prayers that were put up for them; and then they may expect that God will make them known, by the fulfilling of that promise to them, that the generation of the upright shall be blessed. (2.) God shall have the glory of this, for every one shall attribute it to the blessing of God; all that see them shall see so much of the grace of God in them, and his favours towards them, that they shall acknowledge them to be the seed which the Lord hath blessed, and doth bless, for it includes both: See what it is to be blessed of God. Whatever good appears in any, it must be taken notice of as the fruit of God's blessing, and he must be glorified in it.

10. ¶ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with

with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorned herself with her jewels. 11. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Some make this the song of joy and praise to be sung by the prophet in the name of Jerusalem, congratulating the happy change of her circumstances in the accomplishment of the foregoing promises; others make it to be spoken by Christ in the name of the New Testament church triumphing in gospel-grace: We may take in both, the former a type of the latter. We are here taught to rejoice with holy joy to God's honour,

1. In the beginning of this good work, the cloathing of the church with righteousness and salvation, ver. 10. upon this account *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord*: Those that rejoice in God have cause to rejoice greatly, and we need not fear running into an extreme in the greatness of our joy, when we make God the gladness of our joy. The first gospel song begins like this, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*, Luke i. 46, 47. There is just matter for this joy, and all the reason in the world it should terminate in God, for salvation and righteousness are wrought out and brought in, and the church is clothed with it. The salvation God wrought for the Jews, and that righteousness of his in which he appeared for them, and that reformation which appeared among them, made them look as glorious in the eyes of all wise men, as if they had been clothed in robes of state, or nuptial garments: Christ hath clothed his church with an eternal salvation, and that is truly great, by clothing it with the righteousness of both justification and sanctification; that *clean linen is the righteousness of saints*, Rev. xix. 8. Observe how these two are put together; those, and those only shall be clothed with the garments of salvation hereafter, that are covered with the robe of righteousness now; and those are rich and splendid clothing, like the priestly garments, for so the word signifies, with which the *bridegroom decks herself*: the brightness of the sun itself is compared to them, *Psal. xix. 5. He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber completely dressed*; such is the beauty of God's grace in those that are clothed with the robe of righteousness, that by the sanctification of the spirit have God's image renewed upon them; they are decked as a bride to be espoused to God, and taken into covenant with him; they are decked as a priest to be employed for God, and taken into communion with him.

2. In the progress and continuance of this good work, ver. 11. It is not like a day of triumph which is glorious for the present but is soon over; no, the righteousness and salvation with which the church is clothed are durable clothing, so they are said to be, *Isa. xxiii. 18. the church, when she is pleasing herself with the righteousness and salvation that Jesus Christ has clothed her with, rejoiceth to think that these inestimable blessings shall both spring for future ages and spread to distant regions.* (1.) They shall spring forth for ages to come, as the fruits of the earth, which are produced every year, from generation to generation; as the earth, even that which lies common, *brings forth her bud, the tender grass, at the return of the year, and as the garden inclosed causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth in their season, so duly, so constantly, so powerfully, and with such advantage to mankind, will the Lord God cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, by virtue of the covenant of grace, as that by virtue of the covenant of providence*: See what the promised blessings are, *righteousness and praise*, for they that are clothed with righteousness *show forth the praise of him that clothed them*: these shall spring forth under the influence of the dew of divine grace. Though it may sometimes be winter with the church, when those blessings seem to wither and do not appear, yet the root of them is fixed, a spring-time will come, when through the reviving beams of the approaching Sun of righteousness they shall flourish again. (2.) They shall spread far, and spring forth before all the nations; the great salvation shall be published and proclaimed to all the world, and the ends of the earth shall see it.

C H A P. LXII.

The business of prophets was to preach and pray. In this chapter, (1.) The prophet determines to apply himself closely and constantly to this business, ver. 1. (2.) God appoints him and others of his prophets to continue to do so, for the encouragement of his people during the delays of their deliverance, ver. 6, 7. (3.) The promises are here repeated and ratified of the great things God would do for his church; for the Jews after their return out of captivity; and for the Christian church when it shall be set up in the world. (1.) The church shall be made honourable in the eyes of the world, ver. 2. (2.) It shall appear to be very dear to God, precious and honourable in his sight, ver. 3—5. (3.) It shall enjoy great plenty, ver. 8—9. (4.) It shall be released out of captivity, and grow up again into a considerable nation, particularly owned and favoured by heaven, ver. 10—12.

1. **F**OR Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. 2. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. 3. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4. Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5. For as a young man marryeth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

The prophet here tells us,

1. What he will do for the church: A prophet, as he is a seer, so he is a spokesman. This prophet here resolves to perform that office faithfully, ver. 1. *He will not hold his peace, he will not rest: he will mind his business, will take pains, and never desire to take his ease; and herein*

he was a type of Christ, who was indefatigable in executing the office of a prophet, and made it his meat and drink till he had finished his work. Observe here, (1.) What the prophet's resolution is, *He will not hold his peace, he will continue instant in preaching*; he will not faithfully deliver, but frequently repeat the messages he hath received from the Lord. If people receive not the precepts and promises at first, he will inculcate them, and give them line upon line; and he will continue instant in prayer, he will never hold his peace at the throne of grace, till he has prevailed with God for the mercies promised: He will give himself to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, as Christ's ministers must, *Acts vi. 4. must labour frequently in both, and never be weary of this well doing.* The business of ministers is to speak from God to his people, and to God for his people; and in neither of these must they be silent. (2.) What is the principle of this resolution, *for Zion's sake and for Jerusalem's*; not for the sake of any private interest of his own, but for the church's sake, because he has an affection and concern for Zion, and it lies near his heart: Whatever becomes of his own house and family, he desires to see the good of Jerusalem, and resolves to seek it all the days of his life, *Psal. cxxii. 8, 9.—cxxxviii. 5.* It is God's Zion, and his Jerusalem, and it is so to God, and because God's glory is interested in its prosperity. (3.) How long he resolves to continue this importunity; till the promise of the church's righteousness and salvation, which was in the foregoing chapter, be accomplished. Isaiah will not himself live to see the release of the captives out of Babylon, much less the bringing in of the gospel, in which grace reigns through righteousness unto life and salvation; yet he will not hold his peace till these be accomplished, even the utmost of them, because his prophecies will continue speaking of these things, and there shall in every age be a remnant that shall continue to pray for them, as successors to him, till the promises be performed, and so the prayers answered that were grounded upon them. Then the church's righteousness and salvation will go forth as brightness; and as a lamp that burneth, so plainly that it will carry its own evidence along with it; it will bring honour and comfort to the church, which will hereupon both look pleasant and appear illustrious; and it will bring instruction and direction to the world, a light not only to the eyes but to the feet, and to the path of those who before sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.

2. What God will do for the church; the prophet can but pray and preach, but God will confirm the word, and answer the prayers.

1. The church shall be greatly admired, when that righteousness which is her salvation, her praise, and her glory, shall be brought forth, the Gentiles shall see it. The tidings of it shall be carried to the Gentiles, and a tender of it made them; they may so see their righteousness as to share in it, if it be not their own fault. Even Kings shall see and be in love with the glory of thy righteousness, ver. 2. shall overlook the glory of their own courts and kingdoms, and look at and look after the spiritual glory of the church as that which excelleth.

2. She shall be truly admirable. Great names make men considerable in the world, and great respects are paid them thereupon; now it is agreed, that *Honor est in honorante*, the honor is to be valued or not, according as the person is that doth the honour; God is the fountain of honour, and from him the church's honour comes. *Thou shalt be called by a new name*, a pleasant name, such as thou wast never called by before, no, not in the day of thy greatest prosperity, and the reverse of that which thou wast called by in the day of thine affliction; thou shalt have a new character, be advanced to a new dignity, and those about thee shall have new thoughts of thee. This seems to be alluded to in that promise, *Rev. ii. 17. of the white stone, and in the stone a new name, and that, Rev. iii. 12. of the name of the city of my God, and my new name.* It is a name which the mouth of the Lord shall name, who we are sure miscalls nothing, and who will oblige others to call her by the name he hath given her; for his judgment is according to truth, and all shall concur with it sooner or later. Two names God shall give her;

1. He shall call her his crown, ver. 3. *Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord*, not on his head, as adding any real honour or power to him, as crowns do to those that are crowned with them, but in his hand, he is pleased to account them, and to shew them forth as a glory and beauty to him. When he took them to be his people, it was that they might be unto him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory, *Jer. xiii. 11. Thou shalt be a crown of glory and a royal diadem, through the hand, the good hand of thy God upon thee; he shall make thee so, for he shall be to thee a crown of glory*, *Isa. xxviii. 5.* Thou shalt be in his hand, i. e. under his protection; he that shall put glory upon thee, shall create a defence upon all that glory, so that the flowers of thy crown shall never be withered, nor its jewels lost.

2. He shall call her his spouse, ver. 4, 5. This is a yet greater honour, especially considering what a forlorn condition she had been in. (1.) Her case had been very melancholy; she was called *Forsaken*, and her land *Desolate* during the captivity, like a woman reproachfully divorced, or left a disconsolate widow. Such was the state of religion in the world before the preaching of the gospel, it was in a manner forsaken and desolate; a thing that no man looked after or had any real concern for. (2.) It should now be very pleasant, for God would return in mercy to her. Instead of those two names of reproach, she shall be called by two honourable names. 1. She shall be called Hephzi-bah, which signifies, *my delight is in her*; it was the name of Hezekiah's queen, that was Manasseh's mother, *2 Kings xxi. 1.* a proper name for a wife who ought to be her husband's delight, *Prov. v. 19.* And here it is the church's Maker that is her husband; the Lord delighteth in thee. God by his grace has wrought that in his church, which makes her his delight, she being refined and reformed, and brought home to him; and then by his providence he doth that for her which makes it appear that she is his delight, and that he delights to do her good. (2.) She shall be called Beulah, which signifies *married*, whereas she had been desolate, a condition opposed to that of the married wife chap. liv. 2. *Thy land shall be married*, i. e. shall become fruitful again, and be replenished; though she has long been barren, she shall again be peopled, shall again be made to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children, *Psal. cxiii. 9. She shall be married.* For, (1.) Her sons shall heartily espouse the land of their nativity and the interests of it, which they had for a long time neglected, as despairing ever to have any comfortable enjoyment of it. *Thy sons shall marry thee*, i. e. they shall live with thee, and take delight in thee; when they were in Babylon they seemed to have espoused that land, for they were appointed to settle and to seek the peace of it, *Jer. xxix. 5, 6, 7.* But now they shall again marry their own land; as a young man marryeth a virgin that he takes great delight in, is extremely fond of, and is likely to have many children by. It bodes well to a land when its own natives and inhabitants are pleased with it, and prefer it before other lands, when its princes marry their country, and resolve to take their lot with it. (2.) (Which is much better) her God shall betroth her to himself in righteousness, *Hosea ii. 19, 20.* He will take pleasure in his church; as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, is pleased with his relation to her and her affection to him; so shall thy God rejoice over thee, shall rest in his love to thee, *Zeph. iii. 17. shall take pleasure in thee*, *Psal. cxlvii. 11. and shall delight to do thee good with his whole heart and his whole soul*, *Jer. xxxii. 41.* This is very applicable to the love Christ has for his church

church, and the complacency he takes in it; which appears to bright in Solomon's Song, and which will be complete in heaven.

6. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, 7. And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. 8. The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the strangers shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured: 9. But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

Two things are here promised to Jerusalem:

1. *Plenty of the means of grace*; abundance of good preaching and good praying, *ver. 6, 7.* and this shews the method God takes when he designs mercy for a people; he first brings them to their duty, and pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and then brings salvation to them. Provision is made, (1.) That ministers may do their duty as watchmen; it is here spoken of as a token for good, as a step towards farther mercy, and an earnest of it, that in order to what he designed for them, he would set watchmen on their walls that should never hold their peace. Note, 1. Ministers are watchmen on the church's walls, for it is as a city besieged, whose concern it is to have sentinels on the walls, to take notice and give notice of the motions of the enemy. It is necessary that as watchmen they be wakeful and faithful, and willing to endure hardness. 2. They are concerned to stand upon their guard day and night; they must never be off their watch, as long as those for whose souls they watch are not out of danger. 3. They must never hold their peace, they must take all opportunities to give warning to sinners, in season, out of season; and must never betray the cause of Christ by a treacherous or cowardly silence: they must never hold their peace at the throne of grace, must pray and not faint, as Moses lifted up his hands, and kept them steady till Israel had got the victory over Amalek, *Exod. xvii. 10—12.*

(2.) That people may do their duty: as those that make mention of the Lord, let not them keep silence neither, let not them think it enough that their watchmen pray for them, but let them pray for themselves, and all little enough to meet the approaching mercy with due solemnity. Note, 1. It is the character of God's professing people, that they make mention of the Lord, and continue to do so even in bad times, when the land is termed forsaken and desolate; they are the Lord's remembrancers, so the margin reads it; they remember the Lord themselves, and put one another in mind of him. 2. God's professing people must be a praying people, must be public-spirited in prayer, and must wrestle with God in prayer, and continue to do so; keep not silence, never grow remiss in the duty, or weary of it; give him no rest: alluding to an importunate beggar, to the widow that with her continual coming wearied the judge into a compliance: God said to Moses, *Let me alone*, *Exod. xxxiii. 10.* and Jacob to Christ, *I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me*, *Gen. xxxii. 26.* 3. God is so far from being displeased with our pressing importunity, as men commonly are, that he invites and encourageth it; he bids us to cry after him, not as the disciples that were uneasy at it, *Matth. xv. 23.* He bids us make pressing instances at the throne of grace, and give him no rest, *Luke xi. 5, 6.* He suffers himself not only to be reasoned with, but to be wrestled with. 4. The public welfare and prosperity of God's Jerusalem is that which we should be most importunate for at the throne of grace; pray for the good of the church, (1.) That it may be safe, that he would establish it, that the interest of the church may be firm, may be settled for the present, and secured to posterity. (2.) That it may be great may be a praise in the earth; that it may be praised, and God may be praised for it. When gospel-truths are cleared and vindicated, when gospel-ordinances are duly administered in their purity and power, when the church becomes eminent for holiness and love, then Jerusalem is a praise in the earth, then it is in reputation. 5. We must persevere in our prayers for mercy to the church till the mercy comes: must do as the prophet's servant did, go yet seven times, till the promising cloud appears, *1 Kings xviii. 47.* 6. It is a good sign that God is coming towards a people in ways of mercy, when he pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and stirs them up to be fervent and constant in their intercessions.

2. *Plenty of all other good things*, *ver. 8.* This follows upon the former, when the people praise God, when all the people praise him, then shall the earth yield her increase, *Psal. lxxvii. 5, 6.* and outward prosperity crowning its piety, shall help to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Observe, 1. The great distress they had been in, and the losses they had sustained; their corn had been meat for their enemies, which they hoped should have been meat for themselves and their families; here was a double grievance, that they themselves wanted that which was necessary to the support of life, and were in danger of perishing for want of it, and that their enemies were strengthened by it, had their camp victualled with it, and so were the better able to do them a mischief. God is said to give their corn to their enemies, because he not only permitted it, but ordered it to be the just punishment both of their abuse of plenty, and their symbolizing with strangers, *Isaiah i. 7.* The wine which they had laboured for, and which in their affliction they needed for the relief of those among them that were of a heavy heart, strangers drank it to gratify their lusts with; this fore judgment was threatened for their sins, *Lev. xxxvi. 16. Deut. xxviii. 33.* See how uncertain our creature-comforts are, and how much it is our wisdom to labour for that meat which we can never be robbed of. 2. The great fulness and satisfaction they should now be restored to, *ver. 9.* They that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord. See here, (1.) God's mercy in giving plenty, and peace to enjoy it; that the earth yields her increase, that there are hands to be employed in gathering it in, and that they are not taken off by plague and sickness, or otherwise employed in war; that strangers and enemies do not come and gather it for themselves, or take it from us when we have gathered it, that we eat the labour of our hands, and the bread is not eaten out of our mouths; and especially, that we have opportunity and a heart to honour God with it, and that his courts are open to us, and we are not restrained from attending on him in them. (2.) Our duty in the enjoyment of this mercy; we must gather what God gives with care and industry, we must eat it freely and cheerfully, not bury the gifts of God's bounty, but make use of them; we must, when we have eaten and are full, bless the Lord, and give him thanks for his bounty to us, and we must serve him with our abundance, use it in works of piety and charity, eat it and drink it in the courts of his holiness, where the altar, the priest, and the poor, must all have their share. The greatest comfort that

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a good man hath in his meat and drink, is that it furnisheth him with a meat offering, and a drink offering for the Lord his God, *1 Cor. ii. 14.* that he hath in an estate, is, that it gives him an opportunity of honouring God, and doing good. This wine is to be drunk in the courts of God's holiness, and therefore moderately, and with sobriety, as before the Lord. 3. The solemn ratification of this promise; The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, that he will do this for his people; God confirms it by an oath, that his people that trust in him and his word, may have strong consolation, *Heb. vi. 17, 18.* And since he can swear by no greater, he swears by himself; sometimes by his being, *As I live*, *Ezek. xxxiii. 11.* sometimes by his holiness, *Psal. lxxxix. 35.* here by his power, his right hand (which was lifted up in swearing, *Deut. xxii. 40.*) and his arm of power, for it is a great satisfaction to those who build their hopes on God's promise, to be sure that what he hath promised he is able to perform, *Rom. iv. 21.* To assure us of this, he has sworn by his strength, pawning the reputation of his omnipotence upon it; if he do not do it, let it be said it was because he could not, which the Egyptians shall never say, *Numb. xiv. 16.* nor any other. It is the comfort of God's people, that his power is engaged for them; his right hand, where the Mediator sits.

10. ¶ Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the high-way; gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people. 11. Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 12. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

This as many like passages before, refers to the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, and under the type and figure of that to the great redemption wrought out by Jesus Christ, and the proclaiming of gospel grace and liberty through him.

1. Way shall be made for this salvation; all difficulties shall be removed, and whatever might obstruct it shall be taken out of the way, *ver. 10.* The gates of Babylon shall be thrown open, that they may with freedom go through them; the way from Babylon to the land of Israel shall be prepared, causeways shall be made and cast up through wet and miry places, and the stones gathered out of the place rough and rocky; in the convenient places appointed for their rendezvous, standards shall be set up for their direction and encouragement, that they may embody for their greater safety. Thus John Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, *Matth. iii. 3.* And before Christ by his graces and comforts comes to any for salvation, preparation is made for him by repentance, that is called the preparation of the gospel of peace, *Eph. vi. 15.* here the way is levelled by it, there the feet are shod with it, which comes all to one, for both are in order to a journey.

2. Notice shall be given of this salvation, *ver. 11, 12.* It shall be proclaimed to the captives, that they are set at liberty, and may go if they please; it shall be proclaimed to their neighbours, to all about them, to the end of the world, that God hath pleaded Zion's just, and injured and despised cause. Let it be said to Zion for her comfort, Behold thy salvation cometh, i. e. thy Saviour, who brings salvation; he will bring such a work such a reward in his salvation as shall be admired by all; a reward of comfort and peace with him; but a work of humiliation and reformation before him, to prepare his people for that recompense of their sufferings; and then with reference to each it follows, they shall be called, the holy people, and the redeemed of the Lord; the work before him, which shall be wrought in them and upon them, shall denominate them a holy people, cured of their inclination to idolatry, and consecrated to God only; and the reward with him, the deliverance wrought for them, shall denominate them the redeemed of the Lord, so redeemed as none but God could redeem them; and redeemed to be his, their bonds loosed that they might be his servants. Jerusalem shall then be called, sought out, a city not forsaken; she had been forsaken for many years, there were neither traders nor worshippers that enquired their ways to Jerusalem, as formerly, when it was frequented by both; but now God will again make it considerable, it shall be sought out, visited, resorted to, and court made to it as much as ever. When it is called a holy city, then it is called sought out, for holiness puts an honour and beauty upon any place or person, which draws respect, and makes them to be admired and beloved, and enquired after.

But this being proclaimed to the end of the world, must have a reference to the gospel of Christ, which was to be preached to every creature; and it speaks, (1.) The glory of Christ: It is published immediately to the church, but is thence echoed to every nation; Behold, thy salvation cometh. Christ is not only the saviour, but the salvation itself; for the happiness of believers is not only from him, but in him, *Isaiah xii. 21.* His salvation consists both in the work, and in the reward which he brings with him; for those that are his shall neither be idle, nor lose their labour. (2.) The beauty of the church; Christians shall be called saints, *1 Cor. i. 2.* the holy people for they are chosen and called to salvation through justification; they shall be called the redeemed of the Lord, to him they owe their liberty, and therefore to him they owe their service, and they shall not be ashamed to own both. None are to be called the redeemed of the Lord, but those that are the holy people; the people of God's purchase is a holy nation. And they shall be called sought out; God shall seek them out and find them, wherever they are dispersed, eclipsed, or lost in a crowd; men shall seek them out, that they may join themselves to them, and not forsake them. It is good to associate with the holy people, that we may learn their ways, and with the redeemed of the Lord, that we may share in the blessings of the redemption.

C H A P. LXIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) God coming towards his people in ways of mercy and deliverance, and this is to be joined in the close of the foregoing chapter, where it was said to Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; for here it is shewed how it comes, *ver. 1—6.* (2.) God's people meeting him with their devotions, and addressing themselves to him with suitable affections; and this part of the chapter is carried on to the close of the next. In this we have, (1.) A thankful acknowledgement of the great favours God had bestowed upon them, *ver. 7.* (2.) The magnifying of these favours, from the consideration of God's relation to them, *ver. 9.* His compassionate concern for them, *ver. 9.* Their unworthiness, *ver. 10.* And the occasion which it gave both him and them to call to mind former mercies, *ver. 11—14.* (3.) A very humble and earnest prayer to God to appear for them in their present distress, pleading

pleading God's mercy, ver. 15. their relation to him, ver. 16. their desire towards him, ver. 17. and the influence of their enemies, ver. 18, 19. So that upon the whole we learn to embrace God's promises with an active faith, and then to improve them, and make use of them both in prayers and praises.

1. **WHO** is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. 2. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? 3. I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. 4. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. 5. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. 6. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

It is a glorious victory that is here enquired into first, and then accounted for; (1.) It is a victory obtained by the providence of God over the enemies of Israel; over the Babylonians, say some, whom Cyrus conquered, and God by him; and they will have the prophet to make the first discovery of him in his triumphant return, when he is in the country of Edom: but this can by no means be admitted, because the country of Babylon is always spoken of as the land of the north, whereas Edom lay south from Jerusalem, so that the conqueror could not return through that country; the victory therefore is obtained over the Edomites themselves, who had triumphed in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* and cut off those who making their way as far as they could from the enemy, escaped to the Edomites, *Obad. 12, 13.* and were therefore reckoned with when Babylon was; for no doubt that prophecy was accomplished, though we do not meet in history with the accomplishment of it, *Jer. xlix. 13.* *Bozrah shall become a desolation.* Yet this victory over Edom is put as an instance or specimen of the like victories, obtained over other nations that had been enemies to Israel: this over the Edomites is named, for the sake of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob, *Gen. xxvii. 41.* and perhaps with an allusion to David's glorious triumphs over the Edomites by which it should seem, more than by any other of his victories, he got him a name, *Psal. lx. title, 2 Sam. viii. 13, 14.* But this is not all, (2.) It is a victory obtained by the grace of God in Christ over our spiritual enemies; we find the garments dipped in blood adorning him whose name is called *The word of God*, *Rev. xix. 13.* And who that is, we know very well, by the same token it is through him that we are more than conquerors, over those principalities and powers which on the cross he spoiled and triumphed over.

In this representation of the victory, we have,

1. An admiring question put to the conqueror, *ver. 1, 2.* It is put by the church, or by the prophet in the name of the church. He sees a mighty hero returning in triumph from a bloody engagement, and makes bold to ask him two questions; (1.) *Who he is?* he observes him to come from the country of Edom, to come in such apparel as was glorious to a soldier, not embroidered or laced, but besmeared with blood and dirt: he observes he does not come as one either frightened or fatigued, but travels in the greatness of his strength, altogether unbroken.

*Triumphant and victorious he appears,
And honour in his looks and habits wears;
How strong he treads, how stately doth he go!
Pompous and solemn in his pace;
And full of Majesty, as is his face;
Who is this mighty hero? who?*

MR. NORRIS.

The question, *Who is this?* perhaps means the same with that which Joshua put to the same person when he appeared to him with his sword drawn, *Josh. v. 13.* *Art thou for us or for our adversaries?* Or rather, the same with that which Israel put in a way of adoration, *Exod. xv. 11.* *Who is a God like unto thee?* (2.) The other question is, *Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel?* What hard service hast thou been engaged in, that thou carriest with thee these marks of toil and danger? Is it possible that one who had such majesty and terror in his countenance, should be employed in the mean and servile work of treading the wine-press? Sure it is not. That which is really the glory of the Redeemer, yet *prima facie* seems a disparagement to him, as it would be to a mighty prince to do the work of the wine-dressers and husbandmen; for he took upon him the form of a servant, and carried with him the marks of servitude.

2. An admirable answer returned by him.

1. He tells who he is; *I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.* He is the Saviour. God was Israel's Saviour out of the hand of their oppressors; the Lord Jesus is our's; his name, Jesus, signifies a saviour, for he saves his people from their sins. In the salvation wrought he will have us to take notice. (1.) Of the truth of his promise which is therein performed; he speaks in righteousness, and will therefore make good every word that he hath spoken, with which he will have us to compare what he doth; that setting the word and the work the one over-against the other, what he doth may ratify what he hath said, and what he hath said may justify what he doth. (2.) Of the efficacy of his power, which is therein exerted; he is mighty to save, able to bring about the promised redemption, whatever difficulties and oppositions may lie in the way of it.

*It is I, who to my promise faithful stand,
I, who the powers of death, hell, and the grave,
Have foil'd with this all-conquering hand,
I, who most ready am, and mighty too, to save.*

MR. NORRIS.

2. He tells how he came to appear in this hue, *ver. 3.* *I have trodden the wine-press alone.* Being compared to one that treads in the wine fat; such

is his condescension in the midst of his triumphs, that he doth not scorn the comparison, but admits it, and carries it on. He doth indeed tread the wine-press, but it is the great wine-press of the wrath of God, *Rev. xiv. 19.* in which we sinners deserve to have been cast; but Christ was pleased to cast our enemies into it, and to destroy him that had the power of death, that he might deliver us. And of this the bloody work which God sometimes made among the enemies of the Jews, and which is here foretold, was a type and figure.

Observe the account the conqueror gives of his victory.

1. He gains the victory purely by his own strength; *I have trodden in the wine-press alone*, *ver. 3.* When God delivered his people and destroyed their enemies, if he made use of instruments, he did not need them; but among his people, for whom the salvation was to be wrought, there was no assistance offered itself; they were weak and helpless, and had no ability to do any thing for their own relief; they were desponding and listless, and had no heart to do any thing; they were not disposed to give the least stroke or struggle for liberty; neither the captives themselves, nor any of their friends for them, *ver. 5.* *I looked and there was none to help*, as one would have expected, nothing of a bold, active spirit appeared among them; nay, there was not only none to lead, but which was more strange, there was none to uphold, none that would come in as seconds, that had the courage to join with Cyrus against the oppressors; therefore mine arm brought about the salvation, not by created might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, that is, his own arm. Note, God can help when all other helpers fail; nay, this is his time to help, and therefore for that very reason he will put forth his own power so much the more gloriously. But this is most fully applicable to Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, which he obtained by single combat. He trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone, and triumphed over principalities and powers in himself, *Col. ii. 15.* *Of the people there was none with him*; for when he entered the lists with the powers of darkness, all his disciples forsook him and fled. There was none to help, none that could, none that durst; and he might well wonder that among the children of men, whose concern it was, there was not only none to uphold, but so many to oppose and hinder if they could.

2. He undertakes the war purely out of his own zeal: it is in his anger, it is in his fury, that he treads down his enemies, *ver. 3.* and that fury upholds him, and carries him on in this enterprise, *ver. 5.* God wrought salvation for the oppressed Jews, purely because he was very angry with the oppressing Babylonians, angry at their idolatries and forceries, their pride and cruelty; and the injuries they did to his people; in which as they increased and grew more insolent and outrageous, his anger increased to fury. Our Lord Jesus wrought out our redemption in a holy zeal for the honour of his Father and the happiness of mankind, and a holy indignation at the daring attempts Satan had made upon both; this zeal and indignation upheld him throughout his whole undertaking.

Two branches there were of this zeal that animated him:

(1.) He had a zeal against his and his people's enemies; *The day of vengeance is in my heart*, *ver. 4.* the day fixed in the eternal counsels for taking vengeance on them, this is written in his heart, so that he could not forget it could not let it slip; his heart was full of it, and it lay as a charge, as a weight upon him, which made him push on his holy war with so much vigour. Note, There is a day fixed for divine vengeance, which may be long deferred, but will come at last; and we may be content to wait for it, for the Redeemer himself doth, though his heart is upon it.

(2.) He had a zeal for his people, and all that he designed should share in the intended salvation; *the year of my redeemed is come*, i. e. the year appointed for their redemption. The year was fixed for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and God kept time to a day, *Exod. xii. 41.* so there was for their release out of Babylon, *Dan. ix. 2.* so there was for Christ's coming to destroy the works of the devil; so there is for all the deliverances of the church, and the deliverer has an eye to it. Observe, 1. With what a pleasure he speaks of his people; they are my redeemed: They are his own, dear to him. Though their redemption is not yet wrought out, yet he calls them his redeemed, because it shall as surely be done as if it were done already. 2. With what a pleasure he speaks of his people's redemption, how glad he is that the time is come, though he is like to meet with a sharp encounter. Now the year of my redeemed is come, *Lo I come*; delay shall be no longer; *Now will I arise*, saith the Lord; *Now thou shalt see what I will do to Pharaoh.* Note, The promised salvation must be patiently waited for, till the time appointed comes; yet we must attend the promises with our prayers. Doth Christ say, *Surely I come quickly*; let our hearts reply, *Even so, come*; let the year of the redeemed come.

3. He will obtain a complete victory over them all.

(1.) More is already done; for he now appears red in his apparel; such abundance of blood is shed, that the conqueror's garments are all stained with it. This was long before by dying Jacob foretold concerning Shiloh; that is, Christ, that he should wash his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes, which perhaps this here alludes to, *Gen. xlix. 11.*

*With ornamental drops bedeck'd I stood,
And writ my victory with my enemy's blood.*

MR. NORRIS.

In the destruction of the antichristian powers we meet with abundance of blood shed, *Rev. xiv. 20.—xix. 13.* which yet according to the dialect of prophecy may be understood spiritually, and doubtless so may this here. (2.) More shall yet be done, *ver. 6.* *I will tread down the people*, that yet stand it out against me, in mine anger; for the victorious Redeemer, when the year of the redeemed is come, will go on conquering and to conquer, *Rev. vi. 2.* When he begins, he will also make an end. Observe, How he will complete his victories over the enemies of his church. (1.) He will insatiate them: he will make them drunk, so that there shall be neither sense nor steadiness to their counsels; they shall drink of the cup of his fury, and that shall intoxicate them: Or he will make them drunk with their own blood, *Rev. xvii. 6.* Let those that make themselves drunk with the cup of riot, and then they are in their fury, repent and reform, lest God make them drunk with the cup of trembling, the cup of his fury. (2.) He will infeeble them; he will bring down their strength, and so bring them down to the earth; for what strength can hold out against Omnipotence?

7. ¶ I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses. 8. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. 9. ¶ In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved

saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. 10. ¶ But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. 11. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him? 12. That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? 13. That led them through the deep as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? 14. As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD causeth him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

The prophet is here in the name of the church taking a review, and making a thankful recognition of God's dealings with his church all along, ever since he founded it, before he comes in the latter end of this chapter and in the next, as a watchman upon the walls, earnestly to pray to God for his compassion towards her in her present deplorable state; and it was usual for God's people in their prayers thus to look back.

1. Here is a general acknowledgment of God's goodness to them all along, ver. 7. It was said in general of God's prophets and people, chap. lxii. 6. that they make mention of the Lord; now here we are told what it is in God that they do especially delight to make mention of, and that is his goodness, which the prophet here so makes mention of, as if he thought he could never say enough of it. He mentions the kindness of God (which never appeared so evident, so eminent as in his love to mankind in sending his Son to save us, Tit. iii. 4.) his loving-kindness, kindness that shews itself in every thing that is endearing; nay, so plentiful are the springs, and so various the streams of divine mercy, that he speaks of it in the plural number, his loving-kindnesses; for if he would count the fruits of his loving-kindness, they are more in number than the sand: With his loving-kindnesses he mentions his praises; i. e. the thankful acknowledgments which the saints make of his loving-kindness, and the angels too. It must be mentioned to God's honour, what a tribute of praise is paid him by all his creatures in consideration of his loving-kindness. See how copiously he speaks, (1.) Of the goodness that is from God, the gifts of his loving-kindness; all that the Lord has bestowed on us in particular, relating to life and godliness, in our personal and family capacity; let every man speak for himself, speak as he has found, and he must own that he has had a great deal bestowed upon him by the divine bounty. But we must also mention the favours bestowed upon his church, his great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he has bestowed on them. Note, We must bless God for others' mercies as well as for our own; and reckon that bestowed on ourselves which is bestowed on the house of Israel. (2.) Of the goodness that is in God: God doth good, because he is good: what he bestowed upon us must be run up to the original; it is according to his mercies, not according to our merits; and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses, which can never be spent. Thus we should magnify God's goodness, and speak honourably of it, not only when we plead it, as David, Psal. li. 1. but when we praise it.

2. Here is particular notice taken of the steps of God's mercy to Israel ever since it was first formed into a nation.

1. The expectations God had concerning them, that they would carry themselves well, ver. 8. When he brought them out of Egypt, and took them into covenant with himself, he said, Surely they are my people, I take them as such, and am willing to hope they will approve themselves so; children that will not lie, i. e. that will not dissemble with God in their covenantings with him, nor treacherously depart from him by breaking their covenant, and starting aside like a broken bow. They said more than once, All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient; and thereupon he took them to be his peculiar people, saying, Surely they will not lie. God deals fairly and faithfully with them, and therefore expects they should deal so with him. They are children of the covenant, Acts iii. 25. children of those that came unto the Lord, and therefore it may be hoped they will tread in the steps of their father's constancy. Note, God's people are children that will not lie; for those that will are not his children, but the devil's.

2. The favour he shewed them, with an eye to these expectations: So he was their Saviour, out of the bondage of Egypt, and all the calamities of their wilderness state, and many a time since he had been their Saviour.

See particularly, ver. 9. what he did for them as their Saviour. (1.) The principle that moved him to work salvation for them; it was in his love and in his pity, out of mere compassion to them, and a tender affection for them, not because he either needed them, or could be benefited by them: This is strangely expressed here, in all their affliction he was afflicted; not that the eternal mind is capable of grieving, or God's infinite blessedness of suffering the least damage or diminution: God cannot be afflicted, but thus he is pleased to shew forth the love and concern he has for his people in their affliction; thus far he sympathizeth with them, that he takes what injury is done to them as done to himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. Their cries moved him, Exod. iii. 7. and he appears for them so vigorously, as if he were pained in their pain; Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? This is a matter of great comfort to God's people in their affliction, that God is so far from afflicting willingly, Lam. iii. 33. that if they humble themselves under his hand he is afflicted in their affliction, as the tender parents are in the severe operations which the case of a sick child calls for. There is another reading of these words in the original, In all their affliction there was no affliction; though they were in great affliction, yet the property of it was so altered by the grace of God sanctifying it to them for their good, the rigour of it was so mitigated, and it was so allayed and balanced with mercies, they were so wonderfully supported and comforted under it, and it proved so short, and ended so well, that it was in effect no affliction. The troubles of the saints are not that to them that they are to others, they are not afflictions, but medicines; they are enabled to call them light and but for a moment, and with an eye to heaven as all in all, to make nothing of them.

(2.) The person employed in their salvation; the angel of his face, or presence. Some understand it of a created angel, the highest angel in heaven, even the angel of his presence, that attends next the throne of his glory, is not thought too great, too good to be sent on this errand. Thus the little ones' angels are said to be those that always behold the face of our Father, Matth. xviii. 10. But this is rather to be understood of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, that angel of whom God spake to Moses, Exod. xxiii. 20. whose voice Israel was to obey. He is called Jehovah, Exod. xiii. 21.—xiv. 19—21. He is the angel of the covenant, God's messenger to

the world, Mal. iii. 1. He is the angel of God's face, for he is the express image of his person; and the glory of God shines in the face of Christ. He that was to work out the eternal salvation, as an earnest of that, wrought out the temporal salvations that were typical of it.

(3.) The progress and perseverance of this favour. He not only redeemed them out of their bondage, but he bare them, and carried them all the days of old; they were weak, but he supported them by his power, sustained them by his bounty, when they were burdened and ready to sink he bore them up; in the wars they made upon the nations he stood by them and bore them out; though they were peevish, he bore with them, and suffered their manners, Acts xiii. 18. He carried them, as the nursing father doth the child, though they would have tired any arm but his; carried them as the eagle her young upon her wings, Deut. xxxii. 11. And it was a long time that he was troubled with them (if we may so speak) it was all the days of old; his care of them was not at an end, even when they were grown up and settled in Canaan. All this was in his love and pity, ex mero motu, he loved them because he would love them, as he saith, Deut. vii. 7, 8.

3. Their disingenuous carriage towards him, and the trouble they thereby brought upon themselves, ver. 10. But they rebelled. Things looked very hopeful and promising: one would have thought they should have continued dutiful children to God, and then no doubt but he would have continued a gracious Father to them; but here is a sad change on both sides, and on them be the breach. (1.) They revolted from their allegiance to God, and took up arms against him; they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit with their unbelief and murmuring, besides the iniquity of the golden calf; and this hath been their way and manner ever since. Though he had so good an opinion of them that they would not lie, though he had done so much for them, born them and carried them, yet they thus ill requited him, like foolish people and unwise, Deut. xxxii. 6. This grieved him, Psal. xcvi. 10. The ungrateful rebellions of God's children against him are a vexation to his Holy Spirit. (2.) Thereupon he justly withdrew his protection, and not only so, but made war upon them, as a prince justly doth upon the rebels. He who had been so much their friend was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them, by one judgment after another, both in the wilderness, and after their settlement in Canaan. See the malignity and mischievousness of sin; it makes God an enemy, even to those for whom he has done the part of a good friend; and makes him angry that was all love and pity. See the folly of sinners, they wilfully lose him for a friend that is the most desirable friend, and make him their enemy that is the most formidable enemy. This refers especially to those calamities that were of late brought upon them, by their captivity in Babylon, for their idolatries and other sins. That which is both the original and the great aggravation of their troubles was, that God was turned to be their enemy.

4. A particular reflection made on this occasion upon what God did for them, when he first formed them into a people; Then he remembered the days of old, ver. 11. This may be understood either, 1. Of the people: Israel (then spoken of as a single person remembered the days of old, looked into their Bibles, read the story of God's bringing their fathers out of Egypt, and considered it more closely than ever they did before, and reasoned upon it, as Gideon did, Judg. vi. 13. Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? Where is he that brought them up out of Egypt? Is he not as able to bring us up out of Babylon? Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Where is the Lord God of our fathers? This they consider as an inducement and an encouragement to them to repent and return to him; their fathers were a provoking people, and yet found him a pardoning God; and why may not they find him so, if they return to him? they also use it as a plea with God in prayer for the turning again of their captivity, like that chap. li. 9, 10. Note, When the present days are dark and cloudy, it is good to remember the days of old, to recollect our own and others' experiences of the divine power and goodness, and make use of them: to look back upon the years of the right hand of the most High, Psal. lxxvii. 5—10. and remember that he is God, and changeth not. Or, (2.) We may understand it of God; he put himself in mind of the days of old, of his covenant with Abraham, Lev. xxvi. 42, he said, Where is he that brought Israel up out of the sea; stirring up himself to come and save them with this consideration, Why should not I appear for them now as I did for their fathers, who were as undeserving, as ill-deserving as they are? See how far off divine mercy will go, how far back it will look, to find out a reason for doing good to his people, when no present considerations appear but what make against them. Nay, it makes that a reason for relieving them, which might have been used as a reason for abandoning them. He might have said, I have delivered them formerly; but they have again brought trouble upon themselves, (Prov. xix. 19.) therefore I will deliver them no more, (Judg. x. 13.) No, mercy rejoiceth against judgment, and turns the argument the other way, I have formerly delivered them, and therefore will now.

Which way soever we take it, whether the people plead it with God, or God with himself, let us view the particulars; and they agree very much with that confession and prayer which the children of the captivity made upon a solemn fast-day, Neh. ix. 5, &c. which may serve as a comment on these verses here, which call to mind Moses and his people; i. e. what God did by Moses for his people, especially in bringing them through the Red-sea, for that is it that is here most insisted on; for it was a work which he much gloried in, and which his people therefore may in a particular manner encourage themselves with the remembrance of.

1. God led them by the right hand of Moses, (ver. 12.) and the wonder-working rod in his hand, Psal. lxxvii. 20. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses: It was not Moses that led them, no more than it was Moses that fed them, John vi. 32. but God by Moses: for it was he that qualified Moses for, called him to, assisted and prospered him in, that great undertaking. Moses is here called the shepherd of his flock: God was the owner of the flock, and the chief shepherd of Israel, Psal. lxxx. 1. but Moses was a shepherd under him; and he was insured to labour and patience, and so fitted for this pastoral care by his being trained up to keep the flock of his father Jethro. Herein he was a type of Christ the good shepherd, that lays down his life for the sheep; which was more than Moses did for Israel, though he did a great deal for them.

2. He puts his holy Spirit within him; the Spirit of God was among them, and not only his providence but his grace did work for them, Neh. ix. 20. Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them. The Spirit of wisdom and courage, as well as the Spirit of prophecy, was put into Moses, to qualify him for that service among them to which he was called; and some of his spirit was put upon the seventy elders, Numb. xi. 17. This was a great blessing to Israel, that they had not only inspired writings, but inspired men among them.

3. He carried them safely through the Red-sea, and thereby saved them out of the hands of Pharaoh. (1.) He divided the waters before them, ver. 12. so that it gave them not only passage, but protection, not only opened them a lane, but erected them a wall on either side. (2.) He led them through the deep as a horse in the wilderness or in the plain, ver. 13. they and their wives and children, with all their bag and baggage, went as easily and readily through the bottom of the sea, though we may suppose it muddy, or stony,

or both, as a horse goes along upon even ground; so that they did not stumble, though it was an untrodden path, which neither they nor any one else ever went before. If God make us a way he will make it plain and level; the road he opens to his people he will lead them in. (3.) To complete the mercy, he brought them up out of the sea, ver. 11. Though the ascent it is likely, was very steep, dirty, and slippery, and unconquerable at least by the women and children, and the men, considering how they were loaded, *Exod. xii. 34.* and how fatigued; yet God by his power brought them up from the depth of the earth; and it was a kind of resurrection to them; it was as *life from the dead.*

4. He brought them safe to a place of rest: *As a beast goes down into the valley,* fair and softly, and by leisure steps, so *the Spirit of the Lord* caused him to rest. Many a time in their march through the wilderness they had resting-places provided for them, by the direction of the Spirit of the Lord in Moses, ver. 11. And at length they were made to rest for good and all in Canaan, and the Spirit of the Lord gave them that rest according to the promise. It is by the Spirit of the Lord that God's Israel are caused to return to God, and repose in him as their rest.

5. All this he did for them by his own power, for his own praise. (1.) It was by his own power, as the God of nature, that has all the powers of nature at his command; he did it with his glorious arm; the arm of his gallantry or bravery, so the word signifies. It was not Moses's rod, but God's glorious arm that did it. (2.) It was for his own praise; to make himself an everlasting name, ver. 12. a glorious name, ver. 14. that he might be glorified, everlastingly glorified, upon this account. This is that which God is doing in the world with his glorious arm, he is making to himself a glorious name, and it shall last to endless ages, when the most celebrated names of the great ones of the earth shall be written in the dust.

15. ¶ Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the founding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained?

16. Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our Redeemer: thy name is from everlasting. 17. O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? return for thy servant's sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. 18. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. 19. We are thine: thou never barest rule over them, they were not called by thy name.

The foregoing praises were intended as an introduction to this prayer, which is continued to the end of the next chapter, and it is an affectionate, importunate, pleading prayer. It is calculated for the time of their captivity. As they had promises, so they had prayers prepared for them against that time of need; that they might take with them words in turning to the Lord, and say unto him what he himself taught them to say, in which they might the better hope to prevail, the words being of God's own inditing. Some good interpreters think this prayer looks farther, and that it speaks the complaints of the Jews under their last and final rejection from God, and destruction by the Romans; for there is one passage in it, *chap. lxiv. 4.* which is applied to the grace of the gospel by the apostle, *1 Cor. ii. 9.* that grace for the rejecting of which they were rejected. In these verses we may observe,

1. The petitions they put up to God. (1.) That he would take cognizance of their case, and of the desires of their souls towards him; *Look down from heaven, and behold.* They knew very well that God sees all, but they pray he would regard them, would condescend to favour them, would look upon them with an eye of compassion and concern; as he looked upon the affliction of his people in Egypt, when he was about to appear for their deliverance. In begging that he would only look down upon them and behold them, they do in effect appeal to his justice against their enemies, and pray judgment against them, as *Jehoiaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 11, 12.* *Behold how they reward us; wilt thou not judge them?* And they refer themselves to his mercy and wisdom, in what way he will relieve them, *Psal. cxxv. 18.* *Look upon mine affliction and my pain: Look down from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory.* God's holiness is his glory. Heaven is his habitation, the throne of his glory, where he doth most manifest his glory, and from whence he is said to look down upon this earth, *Psal. xxxiii. 14.* His holiness is in a special manner celebrated there by the blessed angels, *Isa. vi. 3.* *Rev. iv. 8.* there his holy ones attended him, and are continually about him; so that it is the habitation of holiness, which is an encouragement to all his praying people, who desire to be holy as he is holy, that he dwells in a holy place. (2.) That he would take a course for their relief, ver. 17. *Return,* i. e. change thy way towards us, and proceed not in thy controversy with us: return in mercy, and let us have not only a gracious look towards us, but thy gracious presence with us. God's people dread nothing more than his departures from them, and desire nothing more than his returns to them.

2. The complaints they make to God. Two things they complain of; (1.) That they were given up to themselves, and God's grace did not recover them, ver. 17. It is a strange expostulation, *Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways;* i. e. many among us, the generality of us; and this complaint we have all of us some cause to make, that *thou hast hardened our heart from thy fear.* Some make it to be the language of those among them that were impious and profane; when the prophets reproved them for the error of their ways, their hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandments, they with a daring impudence charge their sin upon God, and make him the author of it; and *why doth he then find fault?* Note, Those are wicked indeed that lay the blame of their wickedness upon God. But I rather take it to be the language of those among them that lamented the unbelief and impenitency of their people, not accusing God of being the author of it, but complaining of it to him. They own that they had erred from God's ways, that their hearts had been hardened from his fear, that they had not received the impressions which the fear of God ought to make upon them; and this was the cause of all their errors from his ways; or, from his fear, i. e. from the true worship of God; and that is a hard heart indeed that is alienated from the service of a God so incontestably great and good. Now this they complain of as their great misery and burden, that God had for their sins left them to this; had permitted them to err from his ways, and had justly withheld his grace, so that their hearts were hardened from his fear. When they ask, *Why hast thou done this,* it is not as charging him with wrong, but lamenting it as a fore judgment; God had made them to

err, and hardened their hearts, not only by withdrawing his spirit from them because they had grieved, and vexed, and quenched him, ver. 10. but by a judicial sentence upon them, *chap. vi. 9, 10.* *Go make the heart of this people fat:* and by his providences concerning them, which had proved sad occasions of their departure from him. David complains of his banishment, that in it he was in effect bidden to go serve other gods, *1 Sam. xxvi. 19.* Their troubles had alienated many of them from God, and prejudiced them against his service, and because the rod of the wicked had lain long on their lot, they were ready to put forth their hand unto iniquity, *Psal. cxxv. 3.* and this was the thing they complained most of, That their afflictions were their temptations, and to many of them invincible ones. Note, Convinced consciences complain most of spiritual judgments, and dread that most in an affliction which draws them from God and duty.

(2.) That they were given up to their enemies, and God's providence did not rescue and relieve them, ver. 18. *Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.* As it was a grief to them that in their captivity the generality of them had lost their affection to God's worship, and had their hearts hardened from it by their affliction, so it was a farther grief that they were deprived of their opportunities of worshipping God in solemn assemblies. They complain not so much of their adversaries treading down their houses and cities, as of their treading down God's sanctuary; because thereby God was immediately affronted, and they were robbed of the comforts they valued most and took most pleasure in.

3. The pleas they urge with God for mercy and deliverance.

1. They plead the tender compassion God used to shew to his people, and his ability and readiness to appear for them, ver. 15. The most prevailing arguments in prayer are those that are taken from God himself, so these are; *Where is thy zeal and thy strength,* God has a zeal for his own glory, and for the comfort of his people; his name is jealous, and he is a jealous God; and he has a strength proportionable, to secure his own glory and the interests of his people in despite of all opposition. Now where are these? Have they not formerly appeared? Why do they not appear now? It cannot be that divine zeal, which is infinitely wise and just, should be cooled; that divine strength, which is infinite, should be weakened. Nay, his people had experienced not only his zeal and his strength, but the founding of his bowels, or rather the yearning of them, such a degree of compassion to them as in men causeth a commotion and toils within them, as *Hos. xi. 8.* *My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together;* and *Jer. xxxi. 20.* *My bowels are troubled, or found, for him.* Thus God useth to be affected towards his people, and to express a multitude of mercies towards them; but where are they now? Are they restrained? *Psal. lxxvii. 9.* Hath God, who so often remembered to be gracious, now forgotten it? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? It can never be. Note, We may ground good expectations of farther mercy upon our experiences of former mercy.

2. They plead God's relation to them as their father, ver. 16. Thy tender mercies are not restrained, for they are the tender mercies of a father, who though he may be for a time displeased with his child, yet natural affection will soon prevail with him to be reconciled; *Doubtless thou art our Father,* and therefore thy bowels will yearn towards us. Such good thoughts of God as these we should always keep up in our hearts. *However it be, yet God is good;* for he is our Father. (1.) They own themselves fatherless if he be not their father, and so cast themselves upon him with whom the fatherless find mercy, *Hos. xiv. 3.* It was the honour of their nation that they had Abraham to their Father, *Matt. iii. 9.* who was the friend of God, and Israel, who was a prince with God; but what the better were they for that, unless they had God himself for their Father; for Abraham and Israel cannot help them, they have not the power that God hath, they are dead long since, and are ignorant of us, and acknowledge us not; they know not what our case is, nor what our wants are, and therefore know not which way to do us a kindness. If Abraham and Israel were alive with us, they would intercede for us and advise us; but they are gone to the other world, and we know not that they have any communication at all with this world, and therefore are not capable of doing us any kindness, any farther than that we have the honour of being called their children. When the father is dead, his sins come to honour, and he knows it not, *John xiv. 21.* But thou, O Lord, art our Father still. The fathers of our flesh may call themselves ever-loving, but they are not ever-living; it is God only that is the immortal Father; that always knows us, and is never at a distance from us; and therefore our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name, the name by which we will know and own thee; it is the name by which from of old thou hast been known; thy people have always looked upon thee as the God to whom they might appeal, to right them, and plead their cause. Nay, according to the sense some gave of this place, though Abraham and Israel not only cannot but would not help us, thou wilt; they have not the pity thou hast. We are so degenerate and corrupt, that Abraham and Israel would not own us for their children, yet we fly to thee as our Father. Abraham cast out his son Ishmael; Jacob disinherited his son Reuben, and cursed Simeon and Levi; but our heavenly Father in pardoning sin is God and not man, *Hos. xi. 9.*

3. They plead God's interest in them, that he was their Lord, their owner and proprietor. We are thy servants, what service we can do thou art entitled to; and therefore we ought not to serve strange kings and strange gods; *Return for thy servants sake.* As a father finds himself obliged by natural affection to relieve and protect his child, so a master thinks himself obliged in honour to rescue and protect his servant. We are thine by the strongest engagements, as well as the highest endearments; *Thou hast born rule over us,* therefore, Lord, assert thine own interest, maintain thine own right; for we are called by thy name; and therefore whither shall we go but to thee to be righted and protected? *We are thine, save us,* *Psal. cxix. 44.* thine own, own us: We are the tribes of thine inheritance, not only thy servants, but thy tenants: we are thine, not only to do work for thee, but to pay rent to thee. The tribes of Israel are God's inheritance, from whence issues that little praise and worship that he receives from this lower world; and wilt thou suffer thine own servants and tenants to be thus abused?

4. They plead that they had had but a short enjoyment of the land of promise and the privileges of the sanctuary, ver. 18. *The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while.* From Abraham to David were but fourteen generations, and from David to the captivity but fourteen more, *Matt. i. 17.* and that was but a little while in comparison with what might have been expected from the promise of the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, *Gen. xvii. 8.* and from the power that was put forth to bring them into that land, and settle them in it. Though we are the people of thy holiness, distinguished from other people, and consecrated to thee, yet we are soon dislodged. But this they might thank themselves for; they were in profession the people of God's holiness, but it was their wickedness that turned them out of the possession of that land.

5. They plead that those who had and kept possession of their land, were such as were strangers to God, such as he had no service or honour from; *Thou never bearest rule over them,* nor did they ever yield thee any obedience: they were not called by thy name, but profess relation to other gods, and

were

were the worshippers of them. Will God suffer those that stand in no relation to him to trample upon those that do? Some give another reading of this: *We are become as those whom thou didst never bear rule over, nor were called by thy name*; we are rejected and abandoned, despised and trampled upon, as if we never had been in thy service, nor had thy name called upon us. Thus the shield of *Saul was vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil*. But the covenant, that seems to be forgotten, shall be remembered again.

C H A P. LXIV.

This chapter goes on with that pathetic pleading prayer, which the church offered up to God in the latter part of the foregoing chapter. They had argued from their covenant-relation to God and his interest and concern in them; now here, (1.) They pray that God would appear in some remarkable, surprising manner for them against his and their enemies, ver. 1, 2. (2.) They plead what God had formerly done, and was always ready to do for his people, ver. 3, 4, 5. (3.) They confess themselves to be sinful and unworthy of God's favour, and they had deserved the judgments they were now under, ver. 6, 7. (4.) They refer themselves to the mercy of God as a father, and submit themselves to his sovereignty, ver. 8. (5.) They represent the very deplorable condition they were in, and earnestly pray for the pardon of sin, and the turning away of God's anger, ver. 9—12. And this was not only intended for the use of the captive Jews, but may serve for direction to the church in other times of distress, what to ask of God, and how to plead with him. Are God's people at any time in affliction, in great affliction? let them pray, let them thus pray.

1. **O**H that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, 2. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! 3. When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. 4. For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. 5. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

Here, 1. The petition is, that God would appear wonderfully for them now, ver. 1, 2. Their case was represented in the close of the foregoing chapter as very sad, and very hard, and in this case it was time to cry, Help, Lord; O that God would manifest his zeal and his strength! They had prayed, chap. lxiii. 15. that God would look down from heaven, here they pray that he would come down to deliver them, as he had said, *Exod. iii. 8*.

(1.) They desire that God would in his providence manifest himself both to them and for them; when God works some extraordinary deliverance for his people, he is said to shine forth, to shew himself strong; so here they pray that he would rend the heavens and come down; as when he delivered David, he is said to bow the heavens and come down, *Psal. xviii. 9*. to display his power, and justice, and goodness, in an extraordinary manner, so as that all may take notice of them and acknowledge them. This God's people desire and pray for, that they themselves, having the satisfaction of seeing him, though his way be in the sea, others may be made to see him when his way is in the clouds. This is applicable to the second coming of Christ, when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout: *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*.

(2.) They desire that he would vanquish all opposition, and that it might be made to give way before him; that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, that the fire of thy wrath may burn so hot against thine enemies, as even to dissolve the rockiest mountains, and melt them down before it, as metal in the furnace, which is made liquid, and cast into what shape the operator pleaseth: so the melting fire burns, ver. 2. Let things be put in to a ferment, in order to a glorious revolution in favour of the church, as the fire causeth the waters to boil. There is an allusion here, some think, to the volcanos or burning mountains which sometimes send forth such sulphurous streams, as make the adjacent rivers and seas to boil; which perhaps are left as sensible intimations of the power of God's wrath, and warning pieces of the final conflagration.

(3.) They desire that this may tend very much to the glory and honour of God; may make his name known, not only to his friends, they knew it before, and trusted in his power, but to his adversaries likewise; that they may know it, and tremble at his presence, and may say with the men of Bethshemith, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? Who knows the power of his anger?* Note, Sooner or later God will make his name known to his adversaries, and force those to tremble at his presence, that would not come and worship in his presence. God's name, if it be not a stronghold for us, into which we may run and be safe, will be a stronghold against us, out of the reach of which we cannot run and be safe. The day will come when nations shall be made to tremble at the presence of God, though they are never so numerous and strong.

2. The plea is, that God had appeared wonderfully for his people formerly; and thou hast, therefore thou wilt, is good arguing at the throne of grace, *Psal. x. 17*.

1. They plead what he had done for his people Israel in particular when he brought them out of Egypt, ver. 3. He then did terrible things in the plagues of Egypt, which they looked not for: they despaired of deliverance, so far were they from any thought of being delivered with such a high hand and out-stretched arm. Then he came down upon mount Sinai in such terror, as made that and the adjacent mountains to flow down at his presence, to skip like rams, *Psal. cxiv. 4*. to tremble, so that they were scattered, and the perpetual hills were made to bow, *Hab. iii. 6*. In the many great salvations God wrought for that people, he did terrible things which they looked not for: made great men, that seemed as stately and strong as mountains, to fall before him, and great opposition to give way. See *Judg. v. 4, 5*. *Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8*. Some refer this to the defeat of Sennacherib's powerful army, which was as surprising an instance of the divine power, as the melting down of rocks and mountains would be.

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2. They plead what God had been used to do, and had declared his gracious purpose to do for his people in general. The provision he has made for the safety and happiness of his people, even of all those that seek him and serve him, and trust in him, is very rich and very ready, so that they need not fear, being either disappointed of it, for it is sure, or disappointed in it, for it is sufficient.

(1.) It is very rich, ver. 4. Men have not heard nor seen what God hath prepared for those that wait for him. Observe the character of God's people, they are such as wait for him in the way of duty, wait for the salvation he hath promised and designed for them; and where the happiness of this people is bound up; it is what God has prepared for them, what he hath designed for them in his counsel, and is in his providence and grace preparing for them, and preparing them for; when he hath done or will do, so it may be read. Some of the Jewish doctors have understood this of the blessings reserved for the days of the Messiah, and to them the apostle applies these words; and others extend them to the glories of the world to come. It is all that goodness which God hath laid up for them that fear him, and wrought for them that trust in him, *Psal. xxxi. 19*. Of this it is here said, that since the beginning of the world, in the most prying and inquisitive ages of it, men have not either by hearing or seeing, the two learning senses, come to the full knowledge of it. None have seen or heard, or can understand, but God himself, what the provision is that is made for the present and future felicity of holy souls. For, (1.) Much of it was concealed in former ages; they knew it not, because the unspeakable riches of Christ were hid in God, were hid from the wise and prudent; but in latter ages they were revealed by the gospel, so the apostle applies this, *1 Cor. ii. 9*. for it follows, ver. 10. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit; compare *Rom. xvi. 25, 26*. with *Eph. iii. 9*. That which men had not heard since the beginning of the world, they should hear before the end of it, and at the end of it should see, when the veil shall be rent to introduce the glory, that is yet to be revealed. God himself knew what he had in store for believers, but none knew besides him. (2.) It cannot be fully comprehended by human understanding, no, not when it is revealed; it is spiritual, and refined from those ideas which our minds are most apt to receive in this world of sense: it is very great, and will far out-do the utmost of our expectations. Even the present peace of believers, much more their future bliss, is such as passeth all conception and expression, *Phil. iv. 7*. None can comprehend it but God himself, whose understanding is infinite. Some give another reason of these words, referring their transcendency, not so much to the work itself as to the author of it; neither hath the eye seen a god besides thee, which doth so (or hath done or can do so) for him that waiteth for him. We must infer from God's work of his wondrous grace, as well as from his works of wondrous power, from the kind things as well as from the great things he doth, that there is no God like unto him, nor any among the sons of the mighty to be compared with him.

(2.) It is very ready, ver. 5. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; meetest him with that good which thou hast prepared for him, ver. 4. and dost not forget those that remember thee in thy ways. See here what communion there is between a gracious God and a gracious soul; (1.) What God expects from us, in order to our having communion with him: (1.) We must make conscience of doing our duty in every thing, we must work righteousness, must do that which is good, and which the Lord our God requires of us, and must do it well. (2.) We must be cheerful in doing our duty; we must rejoice and work righteousness, must delight ourselves in God and in his law, must be pleasant in his service, and sing at our work: God loves a cheerful giver, a cheerful worshipper; we must serve the Lord with gladness. (3.) We must conform ourselves to all the methods of his providence concerning us, and be suitably affected with them; must remember him in his ways, in all the ways wherein he walks, whether he walks towards us, or walks contrary to us; we must mind him, and make mention of him with thanksgiving, when his ways are ways of mercy, in the day of prosperity be joyful; with patience and submission when he contends with us; in the way of thy judgments we have waited for thee; and in a day of adversity we must consider. (2.) We are here told what we may expect from God, if we thus attend him in the way of duty; thou meetest him that doth so. This speaks the friendship, and fellowship, and familiarity to which God admits them; he meets them to converse with them, to manifest himself to them, and to receive their addresses, *Exod. xx. 24*, —*xxix. 43*. It notes likewise his freeness and forwardness in doing them good; he will prevent them with the blessings of his goodness, will rejoice to do good to them that rejoice in working righteousness; and wait to be gracious to those that wait for him. He meets his penitent people with a pardon, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son, *Luke xv. 20*. He meets his praying people with an answer of peace, while they are yet speaking, *chap. lxxv. 24*.

3. They plead the unchangeableness of God's favour, and the stability of his promise, notwithstanding the sins of his people, and his displeasure against them for their sins. Behold thou hast many a time been wroth with us, because we have sinned, and we have been under the tokens of thy wrath; but in those, those ways of thine, the ways of mercy in which we have remembered thee, in those is continuance, or in those thou art ever (his mercy endureth for ever) and therefore we shall at last be saved, though thou art wroth, and we have sinned. This agrees with the tenor of God's covenant, that if we forsake the law, he will chasten our transgression with a rod, but his loving kindness he will not utterly take away, his covenant he will not break, *Psal. lxxxix. 30, &c.* and by this his people have been many a time saved from ruin; when they were just upon the brink of it, see *Psal. lxxviii. 38*. And by this continuance of the covenant we hope to be saved, for its being an everlasting covenant is all our salvation. Though God has been angry with us for our sins; and justly, yet his anger has endured but for a moment, and has been soon over; but in his favour is life, because in it is continuance; in the ways of his favour he proceeds and perseveres, and on that we depend for our salvation, see *Isaiah liv. 7, 8*. It is well for us that our hopes of salvation are built, not upon any merit or sufficiency of our own, for in that there is no certainty; even Adam in innocency did not abide, but upon God's mercies and promises, for in those we are sure is continuance.

6. ¶ But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. 7. And there is none that calleth upon thy name; that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. 8. But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. 9. ¶ Be not wroth very fore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity

quity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. 10. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. 11. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. 12. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

As we have the Lamentations of Jeremiah, so here we have the Lamentations of Isaiah; the subject of both are the same, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and the sin of Israel that brought that destruction; only with this difference, Isaiah sees it at a distance, and laments it by the spirit of prophecy, Jeremiah saw it accomplished. In these verses,

1. The people of God in their afflictions confess and bewail their sins, thereby justifying God in their afflictions, owning themselves unworthy of his mercy, and thereby both improving their troubles, and preparing for deliverance. Now they were under divine rebukes for sin, they had nothing to trust to but the mere mercy of God, and the continuance of that; for among themselves there is none to help, none to uphold, none to stand in the gap and make intercession; for they are all polluted with sin, and therefore unworthy to intercede; all careless and remiss in duty, and therefore unable and unfit to do it.

(1.) There was a general corruption of manners among them, *ver. 6.* *We are all as an unclean thing*, or as an unclean person, as one overspread with a leprosy, that was to be shut out of the camp; the body of the people were like one under a ceremonial pollution, that was not admitted into the courts of the tabernacle: or, like one labouring under some loathsome disease, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, nothing but wounds and bruises, *Isaiah i. 6.* We are all by sin become not only obnoxious to God's justice, but odious to his holiness; for sin is that *abominable thing which the Lord hates, and cannot endure to look upon: Even all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; i. e. (1.)* The best of our persons are so; we are all so corrupt and polluted, that even those among us who pass for righteous men, in comparison with what our fathers were, that *rejoiced and wrought righteousness*, (*ver. 5.*) are but as filthy rags, fit to be cast to the dunghill; *The best of them is as a brier.* (2.) The best of our performances are so; there is not only a general corruption of manners, but in devotion too; those which pass for the sacrifices of righteousness, when they come to be enquired into, are *the torn, and the lame, and the sick*, and therefore are provoking to God, as nauseous and filthy rags. Our performances, though they be never so plausible, if we depend upon them as our righteousnesses, and think to merit by them at God's hand, they are as filthy rags; rags, and will not cover us; filthy rags, and will but defile us. True penitents cast away their idols as filthy rags, *chap. xxx. 22.* odious in their sight; here they acknowledge even their righteousnesses to be so in God's sight, if he should deal with them in strict justice. Our best duties are so defective, and so far short of the rule, that they are as rags, and so full of sin and corruption cleaving to them, that they are as filthy rags. When we would do good, evil is present with us; and the iniquity of our holy things would be our ruin, if we were under the law.

(2.) There was a general coldness of devotion among them, *ver. 7.* The measure was filled by the abounding iniquity of the people, and nothing was done to empty it. (1.) Prayer was in a manner neglected; *There is none that calls on thy name*, none that seeks to thee for grace to reform us, and take away sin, or for mercy to relieve us, and take away the judgments which our sins have brought upon us. Therefore people are so bad, because they do not pray; compare *Psal. xiv. 3, 4.* *They are altogether become filthy, for they call not upon the Lord.* It bodes ill to a people, when prayer is restrained among them. (2.) It was very negligently performed; if there was here and there one that called on God's name, it was with a great deal of indifference: *There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of God.* Note, 1. To pray is to take hold of God, by faith to take hold of the promises, and the declarations God has made of his good-will to us, and to plead them with him; and to take hold of him as of one who is about to depart from us, earnestly begging of him not to leave us; or of one that is departed, soliciting his return; to take hold of him, as he that wrestles takes hold of him he wrestles with; for the seed of Jacob wrestle with him, and so prevail. But when we take hold on God, it is as the boatman with his hook takes hold on the shore, as if he would pull the shore to him, but really it is to pull himself to the shore; so we pray, not to bring God to our mind, but to bring ourselves to his. (2.) Those that would take hold of God in prayer, so as to prevail with him, must stir up themselves to do it; all that is within us must be employed in the duty, and all little enough; our thoughts fixed, and our affections flaming. And in order hereunto, all that is within us must be engaged, and summoned into the service; we must stir up the gift that is in us, by an actual consideration of the importance of the work that is before us, and a close application of mind to it; but how can we expect God should come to us in ways of mercy, when there are none that do this, when those that profess to be intercessors are mere triflers?

2. They acknowledge their afflictions to be the fruit and product of their own sins and God's wrath.

(1.) They brought their troubles upon themselves by their own folly; we are all as an unclean thing, and therefore we do all fade away as a leaf; *ver. 6.* we not only wither and lose our beauty, but we fall and drop off (so the word signifies) as leaves in autumn; our profession of religion withers, and we grow dry and sapless, our prosperity withers, and comes to nothing, we fall to the ground, as despicable and contemptible; and then our iniquities like the wind have taken us away, and hurried us into captivity, as the winds in Autumn blow off, and then blow away the faded, withered leaves, *Psal. i. 3, 4.* Sinners are blasted, and then carried away by the malignant and violent wind of their own iniquity; it withers them, and then ruins them.

(2.) God brought their troubles upon them by his wrath. *ver. 7.* *Thou hast hid thy face from us*; i. e. been displeased with us, and refused to afford us any succour: When they made themselves as an unclean thing, no wonder that God turned his face away from them, as loathing them. Yet this was not all, *Thou hast consumed us because of our iniquities.* This is the same complaint with that, *Psal. xc. 7, 8.* *We are consumed by thine anger*; thou hast melted us, so the word is. God had them in the furnace, not to consume them as dross, but to melt them as gold, that they might be refined and new cast.

3. They claim relation to God as their God; and humbly plead it with him, and in consideration of it cheerfully refer themselves to him, *ver. 8.* *But now, O Lord, thou art our Father.* Though we have carried it very undutifully and ungratefully towards thee, yet still we have owned thee as our Father; and though thou hast corrected us, yet thou hast not cast us off; foolish and careless as we are, poor, and despised, and trampled upon

as we are by our enemies, yet still thou art our Father: To thee therefore we return in our repentance, as the prodigal arose and came to his father; to thee we apply ourselves by prayer; from whom should we expect relief and succour but from our Father? It is the wrath of a father that we are under, who will be reconciled, and not keep his anger for ever. God is their Father, (1.) By creation he gave them their being, formed them into a people, shaped them as he pleased: *We are the clay, and thou our potter*, therefore we will not quarrel with thee, however thou art pleased to deal with us, *Jer. xviii. 6.* Nay, therefore we will hope that thou wilt deal well with us, that thou who madest us will new-make us, new-form us, though we have unmade and deformed ourselves. We are all as an unclean thing, but we are all the work of thy hands, therefore do away our uncleanness, that we may be fit for thy use, the use we were made for. We are the work of thy hands, therefore forsake us not, *Psal. cxxxviii. 8.* (2.) By covenant, this is pleaded, *ver. 9.* *Behold see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people*, all the people thou hast in the world, that make open profession of thy name. We are called thy people, so our neighbours look upon us; and therefore what we suffer reflects upon thee; and the relief that our case requires is expected from thee. *We are thy people, and should not a people seek unto their God?* *Isa. viii. 19.* *We are thine, save us*, *Psal. cxix. 94.* Note, when we are under providential rebukes from God, it is good to keep fast hold of our covenant relation to him.

4. They are importunate with God for the turning away of his anger, and the pardoning of their sins, *ver. 9.* *Be not wrath very sore, O Lord*, though we have deserved thou shouldst, *neither remember iniquity for ever against us.* They do not expressly pray for the removal of the judgment they were under, as to that, they refer themselves to God: But, (1.) They pray that God would be reconciled to them, and then they can be easy, whether the affliction be continued or removed; *Be not wrath to extremity*, but let thine anger be mitigated by the clemency and compassion of a father. They do not say, *Lord, rebuke us not*, for that may be necessary, but not in thine anger, not in thy hot displeasure. It is but in a little wrath that God hides his face. (2.) They pray that they may not be dealt with according to the desert of their sin: *Neither remember iniquity for ever.* Such is the evil of sin, that it deserves to be remembered for ever; and this is that which they deprecate, that consequence of sin which is for ever. Those make it to appear they are truly humbled under the hand of God, that are more afraid of the terror of God's wrath, and the fatal consequences of their own sin, than of that of any judgments whatsoever, looking upon these as the sting of death.

5. They lodge in the court of heaven a very melancholy representation or memorial of the lamentable condition they were in, and the ruins they were groaning under.

(1.) Their own houses were in ruins, *ver. 10.* The cities of Judah were destroyed by the Chaldeans, and the inhabitants of them were carried away, so that there was none to repair them, or take any notice of them; which would in a few years make them look like perfect deserts: *Thy holy cities are a wilderness.* The cities of Judah are called *holy cities*, for the people were unto God a kingdom of priests: The cities had synagogues in them, in which God was served: and therefore they lamented the ruins of them, and insisted upon this in pleading with God for them; not so much that they were stately cities, rich or ancient ones, but they are holy cities, cities in which God's name is known, professed, and called upon; these cities are a wilderness, the beauty of them is sullied, they are neither inhabited nor visited, as formerly; *They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land*, *Psal. lxxiv. 8.* Nor was it only the lesser cities that were thus left as a wilderness unfrequented, but even *Zion is a wilderness*, the city of David itself lies in ruins; Jerusalem, that was *beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth*, is now deformed, and is become the scorn and scandal of the whole earth; that noble city is a desolation, a heap of rubbish. See what devastations sin brings upon a people, and an external profession of sanctity will be no fence against them; *Holy cities*, if they become wicked ones, will be soonest of all turned into a wilderness, *Amos iii. 2.*

(2.) God's house was in ruins, *ver. 11.* This they lament most of all, that the temple was burnt with fire; but as soon as it was built they were told what their sin would bring it to, *2 Chron. vii. 21.* *This house which is high shall be an astonishment.* Observe how pathetically they bewail the ruins of the temple: (1.) It was their *holy and beautiful house*; it was a most sumptuous building, but the holiness of it was in their eye the greatest beauty of it; and consequently the profanation of it was the saddest part of its desolation, and that which grieved them most, that the sacred services that used to be performed there were discontinued. (2.) It was the place where their fathers praised God with their sacrifices and songs; what pity is it that that should lie in ashes which had been for so many ages the glory of their nation! It aggravated their present disuse of the songs of Zion, that their fathers had so often praised God with them. They interest God in the cause, when they plead it was the house where he had been praised, and put him in mind too of his covenant with their fathers, by taking notice of their fathers praising him. (3.) With it all their pleasant things were laid waste; all their desires, their delights, all those things which were employed by them in the service of God, which they had a great delight in; not only the furniture of the temples, the altars and table, but especially the sabbaths and new-moons, and all their religious feasts, which they used to keep with gladness: their ministers and solemn assemblies, these were all a desolation. Note, God's people reckon their sacred things their most delectable things; rob them of holy ordinances and the means of grace, and you lay waste all their pleasant things; what have they more? Observe here how God and his people have their interests twisted and interchanged, when they speak of the cities for their own habitation, they call them *thy holy cities*; for to thee we have dedicated them; when they speak of the temple wherein God dwelt, they call it *our beautiful house*, and its furniture *our pleasant things*, for they had heartily espoused it and all the interests of it. If thus we interest God in all our concerns by devoting them to his service, and interest ourselves in all his concerns by laying them near our hearts, we may with satisfaction leave both with him, for he will perfect both.

6. They conclude with an affectionate expostulation, humbly arguing with God concerning their present desolations; *ver. 12.* *Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things? Or, Canst thou contain thyself at these things? Canst thou see thy temple ruined, and not resent it, nor revenge it? Has the jealous God forgotten to be jealous? Psal. lxxiv. 22.* *Arise, O God and plead thine own cause.* Lord, thou art insulted, thou art blasphemed, and wilt thou hold thy peace, and take no notice of it? Shall the highest affronts that can be done to heaven pass unrebuked? When we are abused we hold our peace, because vengeance doth not belong to us, and because we have a God to refer our cause to. When God is injured in his honour, it may justly be expected he should speak in the vindication of it; his people prescribe not to him what he shall say, but their prayer is, (as here) *Psal. lxxviii. 1.* *Keep not thou silence, O God*; and *Psal. cix. 1.* *Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise.* Speak for the conviction of thine enemies, speak for the comfort and relief of thy people; for wilt thou afflict us very sore, or afflict us for ever?

ever? as it may be read. It is a sore affliction to good people to see God's sanctuary laid waste, and nothing done towards the raising it out of its ruins. But God hath said he will not contend for ever, and therefore his people may depend upon it, that their afflictions shall be neither to extremity, not to eternity, but light and for a moment.

C H A P. LXV.

We are now drawing towards the conclusion of this evangelical prophecy, the two last chapters of which direct us to look as far forward as the new heavens and the new earth, the new world which the gospel dispensation should bring in, and the separation that should by it be made between the precious and the vile; For judgment (saith Christ) am I come into this world: And why should it seem absurd that the prophet here should speak of that to which all the prophets were witnesses, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. The rejection of the Jews and the calling in of the Gentiles is often mentioned in the New Testament, as that which was foreseen and foretold by the prophets, Acts x. 43.—xiii. 40. Rom. xvi. 26. In this chapter we have, (1.) The preventing of the Gentiles with the gospel call, ver. 1. (2.) The rejection of the Jews for their obstinacy and unbelief, ver. 2—7. (3.) The saving of a remnant of them, by bringing them into the gospel-church, ver. 8—10. (4.) The judgments of God that should pursue the rejected Jews, ver. 11—16. (5.) The blessings reserved for the Christian church, which should be its joy and glory, ver. 17—25. But these things are here prophesied of under the type and figure of the difference God would make between some and others of the Jews after their return out of captivity, between those that feared God and those that did not; with reproofs of the sins then found among them, and promises of the blessings then in reserve for them.

I AM fought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. 2. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; 3. A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; 4. Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh; and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; 5. Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. 6. Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom. 7. Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

The apostle Paul (an expositor we may depend upon) hath given us the true sense of these verses, and told us what the event they pointed at, and were fulfilled in, namely, the calling in of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, by the preaching of the gospel, Rom. x. 20, 21. And he observes, and herein *Esaias is very bold*, not only in foretelling a thing so incredible and improbable ever to be brought about, but in foretelling it to the Jews, who would take it as a mighty affront to their nation; and therein Moses's words would be made good, Deut. xxxii. 21. *I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are not a people.*

It is here foretold that the Gentiles that had been afar off should be made nigh, ver. 1. Paul reads it thus, *I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not for me.* Observe what a wonderful and blessed change was made with them, and how they were surprised into it. (1.) Those that had long been without God in the world, shall now be set on seeking him; that had not said, *Where is God my maker?* shall now begin to enquire after him; neither they nor their fathers had called upon his name, but either lived without prayer, or prayed to stocks and stones, the work of men's hands: But now they shall be baptized and call upon the name of the Lord, Acts ii. 21. With what pleasure doth the great God here speak of his being sought unto, and how doth he glory in it, especially by those who in time past had not asked for him? for there is joy in heaven over great sinners that repent. (2.) God shall prevent their prayers with his blessings; *I am found of them that sought me not.* This happy acquaintance and correspondence between God and the Gentile world began on his side: they came to know God because they were known of him, Gal. iv. 9. to seek God and find him because they were first sought and found of him. Though in-after communion God is found of those that seek him, Prov. viii. 17. yet in the first conversion he is found of those that seek him not; for therefore we love him because he first loved us. The design of the bounty of common providence to them was that they might seek the Lord, if haply they should feel after him, and find him, Acts xvii. 27. But they sought him not, still he was to them an unknown God, and yet God was found of them. (3.) God gave them the advantages of a divine revelation, which had never made a profession of religion; *I said, Behold me, behold me;* gave them a sight of me, and invited them to take the comfort and benefit of it, who were not called by my name, as the Jews for many ages had been. When the apostles went about from place to place preaching the gospel, this was the substance of what they preached, *Behold God, behold him;* turn towards him, fix the eyes of your minds upon him, acquaint yourselves with him, admire him, adore him; look off your idols that you have made, and look upon the living God that made you. Christ in them said, *Behold me, behold me* with an eye of faith; *Look unto me, and be ye fixed.* And this was said to those that had long been *lo-ammi*, and *lo-ruhamah*, Hos. i. 8, 9. *not a people*, and that had not obtained mercy, Rom. ix. 25, 26.

2. It is here foretold that the Jews that had long been a people near to God should be cast off and set at a distance, ver. 2. The apostle applies this to the Jews in his time, as a seed of evil-doers, Rom. x. 21. But to Israel he saith, *All the day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.* Where observe, (1.) How the Jews were courted to the divine grace: God himself by his prophets, by his Son, by his apostles, stretched forth his hands to them, as wisdom did, Prov. i. 24. *God spread out his hands to them, as one reasoning and expostulating with them;*

not only beckon to them with the finger, but spread out his hands, as being ready to embrace and entertain them; reaching forth the tokens of his favour to them, and importuning them to accept of them. When Christ was crucified his hands were spread out and stretched forth, as if he were preparing to receive returning sinners into his bosom: and this all the day all the gospel day; he waited to be gracious, and was not weary of waiting; even those that came in at the eleventh hour of the day were not rejected (2.) How they contemned the invitation; it was given to a rebellious and gainsaying people; they were bidden to the wedding-supper and would not come, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Now here we have,

1. The bad character of this people; the world shall see it is not for nothing that they are rejected of God; no, it is for their whoredoms that they are put away. Their character in general is such as one would not expect them to deserve that had been so much the favourites of heaven. (1.) They were very wilful; right or wrong they would do as they had a mind. They generally walk on in a way that is not good, not the right way, not a safe way, for they walk after their own thoughts, their own devices and desires. If our guide be our own thoughts, our way is not likely to be good; for every imagination of the thought of our hearts is only evil. God had told them his thoughts, what his mind and will was, but they would walk after their own thoughts, would do what they thought best. (2.) They were very provoking; this was God's complaint of them all along, they grieved him, they vexed his Holy Spirit, as if they would contrive how to make him their enemies. They provoked me to anger continually to my face. They cared not what affront they gave to God, though it were in his sight and presence, in a downright contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice; and this continually, it had been their way and manner ever since they were a people; witness the day of temptation in the wilderness.

The prophet speaks more particularly of their iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers, as the ground of God's casting them off, ver. 7. Now he gives instances of both. (1.) The most provoking iniquity of their fathers was idolatry; this the prophet tells them was provoking God to his face: and it is an iniquity which, as appears by the second commandment, God often visits upon the children: This was the sin that brought them into captivity, and though the captivity pretty well cured them of it, yet when the final ruin of that nation came, that was again brought into the account against them; for in the day when God visits he will visit for that, Exod. xxxii. 34. Perhaps there were many, long after the captivity, who though they did not worship other gods, yet were guilty of the disorders here mentioned; for they married strange wives. (1.) They forsook God's temple, and sacrificed in gardens or groves, that they might have the satisfaction of doing it in their own way, for they liked not God's institutions. (2.) They forsook God's altar, and burnt incense upon bricks, altars of their own contriving; they burnt incense according to their own inventions, which were of no more value in comparison with God's institution, than an altar of bricks in comparison with the golden altar which God appointed them to burn incense on: or upon tiles, so some read it; such as they covered their flat-roofed houses with, and on them sometimes they burnt incense to their idols, as appears, 2 Kings xxiii. 12. where we read of altars on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, and Jer. xix. 13. of their burning incense to the hosts of heaven upon the roofs of their houses. (3.) They used necromancy, or consulting with the dead, and in order to that they remain among the graves, and lodge in the mountains, to seek for the living to the dead, Isa. v. 19. as the witch of Endor: Or they used to consult the evil spirits that haunted the sepulchres. (4.) They violated the laws of God about their meat, and broke through the distinction between clean and unclean, before it was taken away by the gospel: They eat swine's flesh, some indeed chose rather to die than to do it, as Eleazer and the seven brethren in the story of the Maccabees: But it is likely many did, especially when it came to be a test for their lives. In our Saviour's time we read of a vast herd of swine among them, which gives us cause to suspect that there were many then who made so little conscience of the law as to eat swine's flesh, for which they were justly punished in the destruction of the swine. And the broth, or pieces of other forbidden meats, called here *abominable things*, was in their vessels, and made use of for food. The forbidden meat, is called an *abomination*, and they that meddle with it are said to make themselves *abominable*, Lev. xi. 42—43. Those that durst not eat the meat, yet made bold with the broth, because they would come as near as might be to that which was forbidden, to shew how they coveted the forbidden fruit. Perhaps this is here put figuratively for all forbidden pleasures and profits which are obtained by sin, that *abominable sin which the Lord hates*; they loved to be dallying with it, to be tasting of its broth: But those who thus take a pride in venturing upon the borders of sin, and the brink of it, are in danger of falling into the depths of it.

But, (2.) The most provoking iniquity of the Jews in our Saviour's time was their pride and hypocrisy, that sin of the Scribes and Pharisees, against which Christ denounced so many woes, ver. 5. They say, *Stand by thyself, keep off, get thee to thine*, so the original is; keep to thine own companion; but come not near to me, lest thou pollute me, touch me not, I will not allow thee any familiarity with me, for I am holier than thou; and therefore thou art not good enough to converse with me, I am not as other men are, not even as this publican. Though they were ready to say to every one they met with, so that in saying, *I am holier than thou*, they thought themselves holier than any; not only very good, as good as they should be, as good as they needed to be, but better than any of their neighbours. These are a smoke in my nose (saith God) such a smoke that comes not from a quick fire, which soon becomes glowing and pleasant, but from a fire of wet wood that burns all the day, and is nothing but smoke. Note, Nothing in men is more odious and offensive to God than a proud conceit of themselves, and contempt of others; for commonly those are most unholy of all, that think themselves holier than any.

2. The controversy God had with them for this: The proof against them is plain, *Behold, it is written before me*, ver. 6. It is written to be remembered against them in time to come; for they may not perhaps be presently reckoned with. The sin of sinners, and particularly the vain-glorious boasts and scorns of hypocrites, are laid up in store with God, Deut. xxxii. 34. And what is written shall be read and proceeded upon, *I will not keep silence always*, though I may keep silence long: they shall not think him altogether such a one as themselves, as sometimes they have done; but he will recompense, even recompense into their bosom. Those basely abuse religion, that honourable and sacred thing, who make their profession of it the matter of their pride, and the jealous God will reckon with them for it; the profession they boast of shall but serve to aggravate their condemnation. (1.) The iniquity of their fathers shall come against them; not but that their sin deserved whatever judgments God brought upon them, and much heavier, and they owned it, Ezra ix. 13. But God would not have wrought so great a desolation upon them, if he had not therein had an eye to the sins of their fathers: Therefore in the last destruction of Jerusalem God is said to bring upon them the blood of the Old Testament martyrs, even that of Abel, Matth. xxiii. 35. God will reckon with them, not only for their fathers

fathers' idols, but for their *high places*, their *burning incense upon the mountains, and the hills*, though perhaps it was to the true God only. This was blaspheming or reproaching God, it was a reflection upon the choice he had made of the place where he would record his name, and the promise he had made, that there he would meet them and bless them. (2.) Their own with that shall bring ruin upon them; *your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers*, together, the one aggravating the other, is the former work, which, though it may seem to be overlooked and forgotten, shall be *measured into their bosom*. God will render into the bosom, not only of his open enemies, *Psal. lxxix. 12.* but of his false and treacherous friends, *the reproach wherewith they have reproached him*.

8. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one faith*, Destroy it not, for a blessing *is* in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. 9. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there, 10. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have fought me.

This is expounded by St. Paul, *Rom. xi. 1—5.* where, when upon occasion of the rejection of the Jews, it is asked, *Hath God then cast away his people?* He answers, no; for at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace: this prophecy has reference to that distinguished remnant. When that hypocritical nation is to be destroyed, God will separate and secure to himself some from among them; some of the Jews shall be brought to embrace the Christian faith, shall be added to the church, and so be saved. And our Saviour hath told us, that *for the sake of these elect*, the days of the destruction of the Jews should be shortened, and a stop put to the desolation, which otherwise would have proceeded to that degree that *no flesh should be saved*, *Matt. xxiv. 22.* Now,

1. This is illustrated here by a comparison, *ver. 8.* When a vine is so blasted and withered that there seems to be no sap or life in it, and therefore the dresser of the vineyard is in a mind to pluck it up or cut it down; yet if never so little of the juice of the grape fit to make new wine be found, though but in one cluster, a stander-by interposeth, and saith, *Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it*, there is life in the root, and hopes that yet it may become good for something. Good men are blessings to the places where they live; and sometimes God spares whole cities and nations for the sake of a few such in them. How ambitious should we be of this honour, not only to be distinguished from others, but serviceable to others?

2. Here is a description of those that shall make up this saved saving remnant: (1.) They are such as serve God; it is for my servants' sake, *ver. 8.* and they are my servants that shall dwell there, *ver. 9.* God's faithful servants, however they are looked upon, are the best friends their country hath; and those who serve him, therein serve their generation. (2.) They are such as seek God; that make it the end of their lives to glorify God, and the business of their lives to call upon him: It is for my people that have fought me. They that seek God shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful rewarder.

3. Here is an account of the mercy God hath in store for them: The remnant that shall return out of captivity shall have a happy settlement again in their own land, and that by an hereditary right, as a seed out of Jacob, in whom the family is kept up and the entail preserved; and from whom, as from the seed sown, shall spring a numerous increase; and these typify the remnant of Jacob that shall be incorporated into the gospel church by faith. (1.) They shall have a good portion for themselves; they shall inherit my mountains, the holy mountains on which Jerusalem and the temple were built: Or the mountains of Canaan, *the land of promise*, typifying the covenant of grace, which all God's servants, his elect, both inhabit and inherit; they make it their refuge, their rest and residence, so they dwell in it, are at home in it; and they have taken it to be their heritage for ever, and it shall be to them an inheritance incorruptible God's chosen, the spiritual seed of praying Jacob, shall be the inheritors of his mountains of bliss and joy, and shall be carried safe to them through the vale of tears. (2.) They shall have a green pasture for their flocks, *ver. 10.* Sharon and the valley of Achor shall again be as well replenished as ever they were with cattle. Sharon lay westward near Joppa, Achor lay eastward near Jordan, which intimates, that they shall recover the possession of the whole land, that they shall have wherewith to stock it all, and that they shall peaceably enjoy it, and there shall be none to disturb them or make them afraid. Gospel ordinances are the fields and valleys where the sheep of Christ shall go in and out, and find pasture, *John x. 9.* and where they are made to lie down, *Psal. xxiii. 2.* as Israel's herds in the valley of Achor, *Hos. ii. 15.*

11. ¶ But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number. 12. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: 14. Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. 15. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: 16. That he who bleth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the God of truth, and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth: because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

Here the different states of the wicked and godly, the Jews that believed, and their's that still persisted in unbelief, are set the one over-against the other, as life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse.

1. Here is the fearful doom of those that persisted in the idolatry after the deliverance out of Babylon, and infidelity after the preaching of the gospel of Christ. The doom is the same upon both, *ver. 12.* *I will number you to the sword*, as sheep for the slaughter, and there shall be no escaping, no standing out, *ye shall bow down to it*. God's judgments come, (1.) Regularly, and are executed according to the commission. Those fall by the sword that are numbered or counted out to it, and none but they. Though the sword seems to devour promiscuously one as well as another, yet it is made to know its number, and shall not exceed. (2.) Irresistibly; the strongest and most stout-hearted sinner shall be forced to bow before them; for none ever hardened their hearts against God and prospered. Now observe what the sins are that number them to the sword.

1. Idolatry was their ancient sin, *ver. 11.* *Ye are they that instead of seeking me, and serving me as my people, forsake the Lord*, disown him, and cast him off to embrace other gods; that forget my holy mountain, the privileges of that, and the obligations you lie under to that, to burn incense upon the mountains of your idols, *ver. 7.* and have deserted the one only living and true God; they prepared the table for that troop of deities, which the Heathen worship, and poured out drink-offerings to that numberless number of them; for they that thought one God too little, never thought scores and hundred enough, but were still adding to the number of them, till they had as many gods as cities, and their altars were as thick as *heaps in the furrows of the field*, *Hos. xii. 11.* Some take God and Meni, which we translate a troop and a number, to be the proper names of two of their idols, answering to Jupiter and Mercury; whatever they were, their worshippers spared no cost to do them honour; they prepared a table for them, and filled out mixed wine for drink-offerings to them; would pinch their families rather than stint their devotions, which should shame the worshippers of the true God out of their niggardliness.

2. Infidelity was the sin of the latter Jews, *ver. 12.* *When I called, ye did not answer*; which refers to the same that *ver. 2.* did, *I have stretched out my hands to a rebellious people*; and that is applied to those who rejected the gospel. Our Lord Jesus himself called, he stood and cried, *John vii. 37.* but they did not hear, they would not answer; they were not convinced by his reasonings, not moved by his expostulations; both the fair warnings he gave them of death and ruin, and the fair offers he made them of life and happiness, were slighted, and made no impression upon them. Yet this was not all, *Ye did evil before mine eyes*; not by surprise or through inadvertency, but with deliberation, *Ye did choose that wherein I delighted not*; he means, which he did utterly detest and abhor. It is not strange that those who will not be persuaded to choose that which is good, do persist in their choice and pursuit of that which is evil. See the malignity of sin, it is evil in God's eyes, highly offensive to him, and yet it is committed before his eyes, in his sight and presence, and in contempt of him: It is likewise a contradiction to the will of God; it is doing that of choice which we know will displease him.

2. The aggravation of this doom, from the consideration of the happy state of those that were brought to repentance and faith. The blessedness of those that serve God, and the woeful condition of those that rebel against him, are here set the one over-against the other; that they may serve as a foil to each other, *ver. 13, 14, 15, 16.* (1.) God's servants may well think themselves happy, and for ever indebted to that free grace that made them so, when they see how miserable some of their neighbours are for want of that grace, who are hardened and likely to perish for ever in unbelief, and what a narrow escape they had of being among them. See *Isa. lxvi. 24.* (2.) It will add to the grief of those that perish, to see the happiness of God's servants whom they had hated and vilified, and looked upon with the utmost disdain; and especially to think that they might have shared in their bliss, if it had not been their own fault. It made the torment of the rich man in hell the more grievous, that he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, *Luke xvi. 23.* see *Luke xii. 28.* Sometimes the providence of God makes such a difference as this between good and bad in this world, and the prosperity of the righteous becomes grievous, eye-sore, and vexation of heart to the wicked, *Psal. cxii. 10.* However it will be so in the great day: *We fools counted his life madness, and his end without honour; but now, how is he numbered with the saints, and his lot is among the chosen!*

Now the difference of their states here, lies in two things:

1. In point of comfort and satisfaction. (1.) God's servants shall eat and drink, they shall have the bread of life, to feed, to feast upon continually, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, and shall want nothing that is good for them. Heaven's happiness will be to them an everlasting feast; they shall be filled with that which now they hunger and thirst after; but those who set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in that, shall be hungry and thirsty, always empty, always craving; for it is not bread, it furieith, but it satisfieth not. In communion with God and dependence upon him there is full satisfaction, but in sinful pursuits there is nothing but disappointment. (2.) God's servants shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart, they have constant cause for joy, and there is nothing that may be an occasion of grief to them, but they have an allay sufficient for it; and as far as faith is in act and exercise, they have a heart to rejoice, and their joy is their strength. They shall rejoice in their hope, because it shall not make them ashamed. Heaven will be a world of everlasting joy to all that are now sowing in tears. But, on the other hand, they that forsake the Lord shut themselves out from all true joy, for they shall be ashamed of their vain confidence in themselves and their own righteousness, and the hopes they had built thereon: when the expectations of bliss wherewith they had flattered themselves are frustrated, O what confusion will fill their faces! then shall they cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit; perhaps, in this world, when their laughter shall be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness; however in that world, where the torment will be endless, ceaseless, and remediless, nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth to eternity. Let these two be compared, now he is comforted, and thou art tormented; and which of the two will we choose to take our lot with?

2. In point of honour and reputation, *ver. 15, 16.* The memory of the just is and shall be blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot. (1.) The name of the idolaters and unbelievers shall be left for a curse, shall be loaded with ignominy, and made for ever infamous: it shall be used in giving ill characters. Thou art as cruel as a cruel Jew; and in imprecations, God make thee as miserable as a Jew. It shall be for a curse to God's chosen, i. e. for a warning to them; they shall be afraid of falling under the curse upon the Jewish nation: of perishing by the same example of unbelief. The curse of those whom God rejects, should make his chosen stand in awe. The Lord God shall slay thee, i. e. shall quite extirpate the Jews, and cut them off from being a people; they shall no longer live as a nation, nor ever be incorporated again. (2.) The name of God's chosen shall become a blessing; He shall call his servants by another name: the children of the covenant shall no longer be called Jews, but Christians; and to them, under that name, all the promises and privileges of the new covenant shall be secured. This other name shall be an honourable name; it shall not be confined to one nation, but with it men shall bless themselves in the earth,

earth, i. e. all the world over; God shall have servants out of all nations that shall all be dignified with this new name. (1.) They shall give honour to God, both in their prayers and in their solemn oaths; in their addresses for his favour as their felicity, and their appeals to his justice as their judge. This is a part of the homage we owe to God; we must *bless ourselves in him*, i. e. we must reckon that we have enough to make us happy, that we need no more, and can desire no more, if we have him for our God. It is of great consequence what that is which we bless ourselves in, which we most please ourselves with, and value ourselves by our interest in: worldly people bless themselves in the abundance they have of this world's goods, *Psal. xlix. 18. Luke xii. 19.* but God's servants bless themselves in him, as a God all-sufficient for them: He is their crown of glory and diadem of beauty, and their strength and portion. By him also *they shall swear*, and not by any creature or any false god. To his judgment they shall refer themselves, from whom every man's judgment doth proceed. (2.) They shall give honour to him as the *god of truth*; *The God of the amen*; so the word is: some understand it of Christ, who is himself the *amen*, the *faithful witness*, *Rev. iii. 14.* and in whom all the promises are *yea and amen*, *2 Cor. i. 20.* In him we must bless ourselves, and by him we must swear unto the Lord, and covenant with him. He that is *blessed in the earth* (so some read it) *shall be blessed in the true God*, for Christ is the true God, and eternal life, *1 John v. 20.* And it was promised of old that *in him should all the families of the earth be blessed*, *Gen. xii. 3.* Some read it, he shall *bless himself in the God of the faithful people*; in God as the God of all believers; desiring no more but to share in the blessings wherewith they are blessed, to be dealt with as he useth to deal with them. (3.) They shall give him honour as the author of this blessed change, which they have the experience of; they shall think themselves happy in having him for their God that has made them to forget their former troubles, the remembrance of them being swallowed up in their present comforts; because *they are hid from God's eyes*; i. e. they are quite taken away; for if there were any remainder of their troubles, God would be sure to have his eye upon it in compassion to them and concern for them. They shall no longer feel them, for God will no longer see them: He is pleased to speak as if he would make himself easy by making them easy; and therefore they shall with a great deal of satisfaction bless themselves in him.

17. ¶ For, behold; I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. 18. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. 19. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. 20. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. 21. And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. 22. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offsprings with them. 24. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. 25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

These promises, if they were in part fulfilled when the Jews after their return out of captivity were settled in peace in their own land, and brought as it were into a new world, yet they were to have their full accomplishment in the gospel church, militant first, and at length triumphant; *The Jerusalem that is from above, is free, and is the mother of us all.* In the graces and comforts which believers have in and from Christ, we are to look for this new heaven and new earth. It is in the gospel that *old things are past away, and all things are become new*, and by it that those that are in Christ are *new creatures*, *2 Cor. v. 17.* It was a mighty and happy change that was described, *ver. 16.* that the former troubles were forgotten, but here it riseth much higher, even the former world shall be forgotten, and shall no more come in mind. They that were converted to the Christian faith, were so transported with the comforts of it, that all the comforts they were before acquainted with became as nothing to them; not only their foregoing griefs, but their foregoing joys were lost and swallowed up in this. The glorified saints will therefore have forgotten this word, because they will be entirely taken up with the other: *For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth.* See how inexhaustible the divine power is; the same God that created one heaven and earth, can create another: See how entire the happiness of the saints is, it shall be all of a piece; with the new heavens God will create them (if they have occasion for it to make them happy) a new earth too: *The world is your's, if you be Christ's*, *1 Cor. iii. 22.* When God is reconciled to us, which gives us a new earth. The future glory of the saints will be so entirely different from what they ever knew before, that it may well be called *new heavens, and a new earth*, *2 Pet. iii. 13.* *Behold, I make all things new*, *Rev. xxi. 5.*

1. There shall be new joys: For, (1.) All the church's friends, and all that belong to her, shall rejoice, *ver. 18.* You shall be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create. The new things which God creates in and by his gospel, are, and shall be, matter of everlasting joy to all believers. *My servants shall rejoice*, *ver. 13.* at last they shall, though now they mourn: *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* (2.) The church shall be the matter of their joy: so pleasant, so prosperous shall her condition be: *I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.* The church shall not only rejoice, but be rejoiced in. Those that have sorrowed with the church, shall rejoice with her. (3.) The prosperity of the church shall be a rejoicing to God himself, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, *ver. 19.* *I will rejoice in Jerusalem's joy, and will joy in my people;* for in all their affliction he was afflicted. God will not only rejoice in the church's well-doing, but will himself rejoice to do her good, and rest in his love to her; *Zeph. iii. 17.*

What God rejoiceth in, it becomes us to rejoice in. (4.) There shall be no alloy of this joy, nor any alteration of this happy condition of the church; *The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her.* If this relate to any state of the church in this life, it means no more but that the former occasions of grief shall not return, but God's people shall long enjoy an uninterrupted tranquility. But in heaven it shall have a full accomplishment, in respect both of the perfection and perpetuity of the promised joy; there *all tears shall be wiped away.*

2. There shall be new life, *ver. 20.* Untimely deaths by the sword or sickness shall be no more known as they have been, and by this means there shall be no more the voice of crying, *ver. 19.* When there shall be no more death, there shall be no more sorrow, *Rev. xxi. 4.* As death has reigned by sin, so life shall reign by righteousness, *Rom. v. 1—21.* (1.) Believers through Christ shall be satisfied with life, though it be never so short on earth. If an infant ends its days quickly, yet it shall not be reckoned to die untimely, for the shorter its life is, the longer will its rest be; though death reigns over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, yet they dying in the arms of Christ, the second Adam, and belonging to his kingdom, they are not to be called infants of days, but even the child shall be reckoned to die a hundred years old, for he shall rise again at full age, shall rise to eternal life. Some understand it of children, that in their childhood are so eminent for wisdom and grace, and by death nipped in the blossom, that they may be said to die a hundred years old. And as for old men, it is promised, that they shall fill their days with the fruits of righteousness, which they shall still bring forth in old age; to show that the Lord is upright, and then it is a good old age. An old man that is wise, and good, and useful, may truly be said to have filled his days. Old men that have their hearts upon the world, have never filled their days, never have enough of this world, but would still continue longer in it: But that man dies old and full of days (*senectutem*) that with Simeon, having seen God's salvation, desires now to depart in peace. (2.) Unbelievers shall be unsatisfied and unhappy in life, though it be never so long. The sinner, though he lives to be a hundred years old, shall be accursed; his living so long shall be no token to him of the divine favour and blessing, nor shall it be any shelter to him from the divine wrath and curse; the sentence he lies under will certainly be executed, and his long life is but a long reprieve; nay, it is itself a curse to him, for the longer he lives, the more wrath he treasures up against the day of wrath, and will have the more sins to answer for. So that the matter is not great, whether our lives on earth be long or short; but whether we live the lives of saints, or the lives of sinners.

3. There shall be a new enjoyment of the comforts of life: that whereas before it was very uncertain and precarious, their enemies inhabited the houses which they built; and eat the fruit of the trees which they planted; now it shall be otherwise, they shall build houses and inhabit them, shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them, *ver. 21, 22.* This intimates that the labour of their hands shall be blessed and be made to prosper; they shall gain what they aimed at; and what they have gained shall be preserved and secured to them; they shall enjoy it comfortably, and nothing shall embitter it to them, and they shall live to enjoy it long. Strangers shall not break in upon them, to expel them and plant themselves in their room, as sometimes they have done. *Mine elect shall wear out, or long enjoy the work of their hands;* it is honestly got, and it will wear well; it is the work of their hands, which they themselves have laboured for, and it is most comfortable to enjoy that, and not to eat the bread of idleness or bread of deceit; if we have a heart to enjoy it, that is the gift of God's grace, *Ecclesi. iii. 19.* and if we live to enjoy it long, it is the gift of God's providence, for that is here promised. *As the days of a tree, are the days of my people;* as the days of an oak (*1sa. vi. 13.*) whose substance is in it, though it cast its leaves; though it be stripped every winter, it recovers itself again, and lasts many ages. As the days of the tree of life, so the LXX. Christ is to them the tree of life, and in him believers enjoy all those spiritual comforts, which are typified by the abundance of temporal blessings here promised; and it shall not be in the power of their enemies to deprive them of these blessings, or disturb them in the enjoyment of them.

4. There shall be a new generation rising up in their stead, to inherit and enjoy these blessings, *ver. 23.* They shall not labour in vain, for they shall not only enjoy the work of their hands themselves, but they shall leave it with satisfaction to those that shall come after them, and not with such a melancholy prospect as Solomon did, *Ecclesi. ii. 18, 19.* They shall not beget and bring forth children for trouble; for they are themselves the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and there is a blessing entailed upon them by descent from their ancestors, which their offspring with them shall partake of, and shall be, as well as they, the seed of the blessed of the Lord. They shall not bring forth for trouble; for, (1.) God will make their children that rise up comforts to them; they shall have the joy of seeing them walk in the truth. (2.) He will make the times that come after comfortable to their children; as they shall be good, so it shall be well with them; they shall not be brought forth to days of trouble; nor shall it ever be said, *Blessed is the womb that bare not.* In the gospel church Christ's name shall be borne up by a succession, a seed shall serve him, *Psal. xxii. 30.* the seed of the blessed of the Lord.

5. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their God, *ver. 24.* Even before they call I will answer. God will prevent their prayers with the blessings of his goodness; David did but say, *I will confess,* and God forgave, *Psal. xxxii. 5.* The father of the prodigal met him on his return. While they are yet speaking, before they have finished their prayer, I will give them the things they pray for, or the assurances and earnest of it. These are high expressions of God's readiness to hear prayer; and this appears much more in the grace of the gospel than it did under the law; and we owe the comfort of it to the mediation of Christ as our advocate with the Father, and are obliged in gratitude to give a ready ear to God's calls.

6. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their neighbours, *ver. 25.* The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, as they did in Noah's ark. God's people, though they are as sheep in the midst of wolves, yet shall be safe and unhurt; for God will not so much break the power, and tie the hands of their enemies, as formerly, but will turn their hearts, will alter their dispositions by his grace. When Paul, that had been a persecutor of the disciples (that being of the tribe of Benjamin, ravined as a wolf, *Gen. xlix. 27.*) joined himself to them and became one of them, then the wolf and the lamb fed together. So also when the enmity between the Jews and Gentiles was slain, all hostilities ceased, and they fed together as one sheepfold under Christ the great shepherd, *John x. 16.* The enemies of the church ceased to do the mischief they had done, and its members ceased to be so quarrelsome with, and injurious to one another as they had been; so that there was none, either from without or from within, to hurt or destroy, none to disturb it, much less to ruin it, in all the holy mountain, as was promised, *chap. xi. 9.* For, (1.) Men shall be changed; the lion shall no more be a beast of prey, as perhaps he never would have been if sin had not entered, but shall eat straw like the bullock, shall know his owner, and his master's crib, as the ox doth. When those that live by spoil and rapine, and covet to enrich themselves, right or wrong, are brought to

the grace of God to accommodate themselves to their condition, to live by honest labour, and to be content with such things as they have; when they that stole steal no more, but work with their hands the thing that is good, then this is fulfilled, that *the lion shall eat straw like the bullock*. (2.) Satan shall be chained, the dragon bound: for *dust shall be the serpent's meat* again. That great enemy when he has been let loose, has glutted and regaled himself with the precious blood of saints, who by his instigation have been persecuted, and with the precious souls of sinners, who by his instigation have been persecutors, and have ruined themselves for ever: but now he shall be confined to dust, according to the sentence; *on thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat*, Gen. iii. 14. All the enemies of God's church that are subtle and venomous, as serpents, shall be conquered and subdued, and be made to lick the dust. Christ shall reign as Zion's king, till all the enemies of his kingdom be made his footstool, and their's too. And in the holy mountain above, there, and there only, shall this promise have its full accomplishment, that there shall be none to hurt or destroy.

C H A P. LXVI.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, and many expressions the same: and therefore looks the same way, to the different state of the good and bad among the Jews, at their return out of captivity; but that typifying the rejection of the Jews in the days of the Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the setting up of the gospel kingdom in the world. The first verse of the chapter is applied by Stephen to the dismantling of the temple by the planting of the Christian church, Acts vii. 49, 50. which may serve as a key to the whole chapter. We have here, (1.) The contempt God puts upon ceremonial services in comparison with moral duties, and an intimation therein of his purpose shortly to put an end to the temple and sacrifice, and reject those that adhered to them, ver. 1—4. (2.) The salvation God will in due time work for his people, out of the hands of their oppressors, ver. 5. speaking terror to the persecutors, ver. 6. and comfort to the persecuted, a speedy and complete deliverance, ver. 7—9. a joyful settlement, ver. 10, 11. the accession of the Gentiles to them, and abundance of justification therein, ver. 12—14. (3.) The terrible vengeance which God will bring upon the enemies of his church and people, ver. 15—18. (4.) The happy establishment of the church upon large and sure foundations, its constant attendance on God, and triumph over its enemies, ver. 19—24. And we may well expect that this evangelical prophet here in the close of his prophecy, should (as he doth) look as far forward as to the latter days, to the last day, to the days of eternity.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me! and where is the place of my rest? 2. For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. 3. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. 4. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

Here, 1. The temple is slighted in comparison with a gracious soul, ver. 1, 2. The Jews in the prophet's time, and afterwards in Christ's time, gloried much in the temple, and promised themselves great things from it; to humble them, therefore, and to shake their vain confidences, both the prophets and Christ foretold the ruin of the temple, that God would leave it, and then it would soon be desolate. After it was destroyed by the Chaldeans, it soon recovered itself, and the ceremonial services were revived with it; but by the Romans it was made a perpetual desolation, and the ceremonial law was abolished with it. That the world might be prepared for this, they were often told, as here, of what little account the temple was with God.

(1.) That he did not need it: "The heaven was the throne of his glory and government, there he sits infinitely exalted in the highest dignity and dominion, above all blessing and praise. The earth is his footstool, on which he stands, over-ruling all the affairs of it according to his will." If God has so bright a throne, so large a footstool. Where then is the house they can build unto God, that can be the residence of his glory? or Where is the place of his rest? What satisfaction can the eternal mind take in a house made with men's hands? What occasion has he, as we have, for a house to repose himself in, who fainteth not, neither is weary? who neither slumbers nor sleeps; Or if he had occasion, he would not tell us, Psal. l. 12. for all these things hath his hand made, heaven and all its courts, earth and all its borders, and all the hosts of both. All these things have been, have had their beginning by the power of God, who was happy from eternity before they were, and therefore could not be benefited by them. All these things are, so some read it; they still continue, upheld by the same power that made them; so that our goodness extended not to him. If he would have had a house for himself to dwell in, he would have made one himself when he made the world: and if he had made one, it would have continued to this day, as other creatures do, according to his ordinance. So that he had no need of a temple made with hands.

(2.) That he would not need it, so as he would a humble, penitent, gracious heart: He hath a heaven and earth of his own making, and a temple of man's making; but he overlooks them all, that he may look with favour to him that is poor in spirit, humble and serious, self-abasing and self-denying, whose heart is truly contrite for sin, penitent for it, and in pain to get it pardoned, and that trembled at God's word: not as Felix did, with a transient quail, that was over when the sermon was done, but with an habitual awe of God's majesty and purity, and an habitual dread of his justice and wrath; such a heart is a living temple for God, he dwells there, and it is the place of his rest; it is like heaven and earth, his throne and his footstool.

2. Sacrifices are slighted when they come from ungracious hands; the sacrifice of the wicked is not only unacceptable, but it is an abomination to the Lord, Prov. xv. 8. this is largely shewn here, ver. 3, 4. Observe,

1. How detestible their sacrifices were to God. The carnal Jews, after their return out of captivity, though they relapsed not to idolatry, yet grew very careless and loose in the service of God; they brought the *torn, and the lame, and the sick* for sacrifice, Mal. i. 8—13. and this made their services abominable to God; they had not regard to their sacrifices, and therefore how could they think God should have any regard to them; The unbelieving Jews, after the gospel was preached, and in it notice given of the offering up of the great sacrifice, which put an end to all the ceremonial services, yet continued to offer sacrifices, as if the law of Moses had been still in force, and could have made the corners thereunto perfect: And this was an abomination. "He that kills an ox" for his own table, is welcome to do it; but he that now kills it, that thus kills it for God's altar, "is as if he slew a man;" it is as great an offence to God as murder itself; he that doth it, doth in effect set aside Christ's sacrifice, trends under foot the blood of the covenant, and makes himself accessory to the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord; setting up what Christ died to abolish. He that sacrificeth a lamb, if it be a corrupt thing, and not the male in his flock, the best he has, if he think to put off God with any thing, he affronts him instead of pleasing him; it is as if he cut off a dog's neck; a creature in the eye of the law so vile, that whereas an ass might be redeemed, the price of a dog was never to be brought into the treasury, Deut. xxiii. 18. He that offers an oblation a meat-offering, or drink-offering, is as if he thought to make atonement with swine's blood; a creature that must not be eaten or touched, the broth of it was abominable, chap. lxv. 4. much more the blood of it. He that burns incense to God, and so puts contempt upon the incense of Christ's intercession, he is as if he blessed an idol; it was as great an affront to God, as if they had paid their devotions to a false god. Hypocrisy and profaneness are as provoking as idolatry.

2. What their wickedness was, which made their sacrifices thus detestable; it is because they have chosen their own ways, the ways of their own wicked hearts, and not only their hands do, but their soul delighteth in their abominations; they were vicious and immoral in their conversations, chose the way of sin rather than the way of God's commandments, and took pleasure in that which was provoking to God; this made their sacrifices so offensive to God, Isa. i. 11—15. Those that pretended to honour God by a profession of religion, and yet live wicked lives, put an affront upon him, as if he were the patron of sin. And that which was an aggravation of their wickedness was, that they persisted in it, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to repent and reform; they turned a deaf ear to all the warnings of divine justice, and all the offers of divine grace. When I called, none did answer, as before, chap. lxv. 12. And the same follows here that did there, they did evil before mine eyes; being deaf to what he said, they cared not what he saw, but chose that in which they knew he delighted not. How could they expect to please him in their devotions, who took no care to please him in their conversations, but on the contrary designed to provoke him?

3. The doom passed upon them for this; They chose their own ways, therefore, saith God, I also will choose their delusions; they have made their choice (as Mr. Gataker paraphraseth it) and now I will make mine; They have taken what course they pleased with me, and I will take what course I please with them. I will choose their illusions or mockeries; so some. As they have mocked God, and dishonoured him by their wickedness, so God will give them up to their enemies to be trampled upon and insulted by them, or they shall be deceived by those vain confidences with which they have deceived themselves. God will make their sin their punishment; they shall be beaten with their own rod, and hurried into ruin by their own delusions. God will bring their fears upon them, i. e. will bring that upon them which shall be a mighty terror to them; or that which they themselves have been afraid of, and thought to escape by sinful shifts. Unbelieving hearts, and unpurified, unpacified consciences, need no more to make them miserable, than to have their own fears brought upon them.

5. ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. 6. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies. 7. Before she travailed she brought forth: before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. 8. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. 9. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. 10. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: 11. That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations: that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. 12. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: Then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. 13. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. 14. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the LORD shall be known towards his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies.

The prophet having denounced God's judgments against an hypocritical nation, that made a jest of God's word, and would not answer him when he called to them, here turns his speech to those that trembled at his word, to comfort and encourage them; they shall not be involved in the judgments that are coming upon their unbelieving nation. Ministers must distinguish

tinguist thus, that when they speak terror to the wicked, they may not make the hearts of the righteous sad: *Bone Christiane, hoc nihil ad te.* The prophet having assured those that tremble at God's word of a gracious look from him, ver. 1. here brings them a gracious message from him. The word of God has comforts in store for those that by true humiliation for sin are prepared to receive them. There were those, ver. 4. that when God spoke would not hear; but if some will not, others will: If the heart tremble at the word, the ear will be open to it. Now what is here said to them?

1. Let them know that God will plead their just but injured cause against their persecutors, ver. 5. *Your brethren that hated you, said, Let the Lord be glorified. But he shall appear to your joy.* This perhaps might have reference to the case of some of the Jews at their return out of captivity; but nothing like it appears in the history, and therefore it is rather to be referred to the first preachers and professors of the gospel among the Jews to whose case it is very applicable. Observe, 1. How the faithful servants of God were persecuted; *Their brethren hated them.* The apostles were Jews by birth, and yet even in the cities of the Gentiles, the Jews they met with there were their most bitter and implacable enemies, and stirred up the Gentiles against them. The spouse complains, Cant. i. 6. that her mother's children were angry with her, Pilate upbraided our Lord Jesus with this, *Thine own nation hath delivered thee unto me,* John xviii. 35. Their brethren, that should have loved them and encouraged them for their work sake, hated them, and cast them out of their synagogues, excommunicated them, as if they had been the greatest blemishes, who really were the greatest blessings of their church and nation. This was a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. They that hated Christ, hated his disciples, because they supported his kingdom and interest, John xv. 18. And they cast them out for his name's sake, because they were called by his name, and called upon his name, and laid out themselves to advance his name. Note, It is no new thing for church-censures to be misapplied, and for her artillery, that was intended for her defence, to be turned against her best friends, by the treachery of her governors. And they that did this said, *Let the Lord be glorified;* i. e. they pretended conscience, and a zeal for the honour of God and the church in it, and did it with all the formalities of devotion. Our Saviour explains this, and seems to have reference to it, John xvi. 2. *They shall put you out of their synagogues, and whosoever kills you will think that he doth God service: In nomine Domini incipit omne malum.* Or we may understand it as spoken in defiance of God; you say God will be glorified in your deliverance. *Let him be glorified then; Let him make speed and hasten his work,* Isa. v. 19. *Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.* Some take it to be the language of the profane Jews in captivity, bantering their brethren that hoped for deliverance, and ridiculing the expectations they often comforted themselves with, that God would shortly be glorified in it. They thus did what they could to shame the counsel of the poor, Psalm xiv. 6. 2. How they were encouraged under these persecutions: Hold your faith and patience yet a little while, your enemies hate you and oppress you, your brethren hate you and cast you out, but your father in heaven loves you, and will appear for you when no one else will or dare. His providence shall order things so as shall be for comfort to you, he shall appear for your joy, and confusion to those that abuse you and trample on you; they shall be ashamed of their enmity to you. This was fulfilled, when upon the signals given of Jerusalem's approaching ruin, the Jew's hearts failed them for fear; but the disciples of Christ, whom they had hated and persecuted, lifted up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh, Luke xxi. 26. Though God seems to hide himself, he will in due time shew himself.

2. Let them know, that God's appearances for them will be such as will make a great noise in the world, ver. 6. There shall be a voice of noise from the city, from the temple. Some make it the joyful and triumphant voice of the church's friends; others the frightful lamenting voice of her enemies, surprised in the city, and fleeing in vain to the temple for shelter. These voices do but echo to the voice of the Lord, who is now rendering a recompence to his enemies, and those that will not hear him speaking this terror, shall hear them returning the alarms of it in doleful shrieks. We may well think what a confused noise there was in the city and temple when Jerusalem, after a long siege, was at last taken by the Romans. Some think this prophecy was fulfilled in the prodigies that went before that destruction of Jerusalem, related by Josephus in his History of the Wars of the Jews, lib. 7. cap. 31. That the temple doors flew open suddenly of their own accord, and the priests heard a noise of motion or shifting in the most holy place, and presently a voice, saying, *Let us depart hence.* And some time after, one Jesus Bar Annas, at the feast of the tabernacles went up and down the city, continually crying, *A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds; a voice against Jerusalem, and the temple; a voice against all this people.*

3. Let them know, that God will set up a church for himself in the world, which shall be abundantly replenished in a little time, ver. 7. *Before she travailed she brought forth.* This is to be applied in the type to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, which was brought about very easily and silently, without any pain or struggle, such as was when they were brought out of Egypt; that was done by might and power, Deut. iv. 34. but this by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zech. iv. 6. The man-child of their deliverance is rejoiced in, and yet the mother was never in labour for it; before her pain came, she was delivered. This is altogether surprising, uncommon, and without precedent, unless in the story which the Egyptian midwives told of the Hebrew women, Exod. i. 19. that they were lively, and were delivered ere the midwives came in unto them. But shall the earth be made to bring forth her fruits in one day? No, it is the work of some weeks in the spring to renew the face of the earth, and cover it with its products. Some read it to the same purpose with the next clause. *Shall a land be brought forth in one day, or shall a nation be born at once?* Is it to be imagined that a woman at one birth should bring children enow to people a country, and that they should in an instant grow up to maturity? No; something like this was done in the creation. But God hath since rested from all such works, and leaves second causes to produce their effects gradually: *Nihil facit per saltum.* Yet in this case, as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth. Cyrus's proclamation was no sooner issued out, but the captives were formed into a body presently, and were ready to make the best of their way to their own land. And the reason is given, ver. 9. because it is the Lord's doing; he undertakes it whole work is perfect. If he bring to the birth in preparing his people for deliverance, he will cause to bring forth in the accomplishment of the deliverance. When every thing is ripe and ready for their release, and the number of their months is accomplished, so that the children are brought to the birth, shall not I then give strength to bring forth, but leave mother and babe to perish together in the most miserable case? How will this agree with the divine pity? Shall I begin a work and not go through with it? How will that agree with the divine power and perfection? *Am I he that causeth to bring forth* (so the following clause may be read) *and shall I restrain her?* Doth God cause mankind, and all the species of living creatures to propagate and replenish the earth? and will he restrain Zion? will he not make her fruitful in a blessed

offspring to replenish the earth? Or, *Am I he that beget, and should I restrain from bringing forth?* Did God beget the deliverance in his purpose and promise, and will he not bring it forth in the accomplishment and performance of it? But this was a figure of the setting up of the Christian church in the world, and the replenishing of that family with children which was to be named from Jesus Christ. When the Spirit was poured out, and the gospel went forth from Zion, multitudes were converted in a little time, and with little pains, compared with the vast product. The apostles even before they travailed brought forth, and the children born to Christ were so numerous, and so suddenly and easily produced, that they were rather like the dew from the morning's womb than like the son from the mother's womb, Psal. cx. 3. The success of the gospel was astonishing; that light, like the morning, strangely diffused itself till it took hold even of the ends of the earth. Cities and nations were born at once to Christ. The same day that the Spirit was poured out there were three thousand souls added to the church. And when this glorious work was once begun, it was carried on wonderfully, beyond what could be imagined; so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. He that brought to the birth in conviction of sin, caused to bring forth in a thorough conversion to God.

4. Let them know, that their present sorrows shall shortly be turned into abundant joys, ver. 10, 11. Observe,

1. How the church's friends are described; they are such as love her, and mourn with her and for her. Note, All that love God, love Jerusalem; they love the church of God, and lay its interest very near their heart. They admire the beauty of the church, take pleasure in communion with it, and heartily espouse its cause. And they that have a sincere affection for the church, have a cordial sympathy with it in all the cares and sorrows of its military state. They mourn for her, all her grievances are their griefs; and if Jerusalem be in distress, their harps are hung on the willow-trees.

2. How they are encouraged; *Rejoice with her,* and again and again, *I say, Rejoice.* This intimates that Jerusalem shall have cause to rejoice, the days of her mourning shall be at an end, and she shall be comforted according to the time that she hath been afflicted: And it is the will of God that all her friends should join with her in her joys, for they shall share with her in those blessings that will be the matter of her joy. If we suffer with Christ, and sorrow with his church, we shall reign with him, and rejoice with it. We are here called, (1.) To bear our part in the church's praises: *Come rejoice with her, rejoice for joy with her, rejoice greatly, rejoice and know why ye rejoice;* rejoice on the days appointed for public thanksgiving. You that mourned for her in her sorrows, cannot but from the same principle rejoice with her in her joys. (2.) To take our part in the church's comforts: *We must suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations;* the word of God, the covenant of grace, especially the promises of that covenant, the ordinances of God, and all the opportunities of attending on him and conversing with him, are the breasts, which the church calls and counts the breasts of her consolations, where her comforts are laid up, and whence by faith and prayer they are drawn; with her therefore we must suck from their breasts, by an application of the promises of God to ourselves, and a diligent attendance on his ordinances; and with the consolations which are drawn from hence we must be satisfied, and not be unsatisfied though we have never so little of earthly comforts. It is the glory of the church that she hath the Lord for her God, that to her pertains the adoption and service of God, and with the abundance of this glory we must be delighted. We must take more pleasure in our relation to God, and communion with him, than in all the delights of the sons and daughters of men. Whatever is the glory of the church must be our glory and joy, particularly her purity, unity, and increase.

3. Let them know that he who gives them this call to rejoice, will give them cause to do so, and hearts to do so, ver. 12, 13, 14.

1. He will give them cause to do so: For, (1.) They shall enjoy a long uninterrupted course of prosperity; *I will extend, or am extending peace to her,* i. e. all good to her, like a river that runs in a constant stream, still increasing till it be swallowed up in the ocean. The gospel brings with it, wherever it is received in its power, such peace as this, which shall go on like a river, supplying souls with all good, and making them fruitful, as a river doth the lands it passeth through, such a river of peace as the springs of the world's comforts cannot send forth, and the dams of the world's troubles cannot stop or drive back, or its lands rack up; such a river of peace as will carry us to the ocean of boundless and endless bliss. (2.) There shall be large and advantageous additions made to them: *The glory of the Gentiles shall come to them like a flowing-stream;* Gentile-converts shall come pouring into the church, and swell the river of her peace and prosperity; for they shall bring their glory with them; their wealth and honour, their power and interest, shall all be devoted to the service of God, and employed for the good of the church, *Then shall ye suck from the breasts of her consolations;* when you see such crowding for a share in those comforts, you shall be the more solicitous and the more vigorous to secure your share; not for fear of having the less for others coming in to partake of Christ, there is no danger of that, he has enough for all, and enough for each; but their zeal shall provoke you to a holy jealousy: It is well when it doth so, Rom. xi. 14. 2 Cor. ix. 2. (3.) God will be glorified in all; and that ought to be more the matter of our joy than any thing else, ver. 14. *The hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants,* the protecting supporting hand of his almighty power, the supplying, enriching hand of his inexhaustible goodness, the benefit which his servants have by both these, shall be known to his glory as well as their's. And to make this the more illustrious, he will at the same time make known his indignation towards his enemies. God's mercies and justice shall both be manifested and for ever magnified.

2. God will not only give them cause to rejoice, but speak comfort to them, will speak it to their hearts; and it is he only that can do that, and make it fasten there. See what he will do for the comfort of all the sons of Zion. (1.) Their country shall be their tender nurse; ye shall be carried on her sides, under her arms, as little children are, and shall be dandled upon her knees, as darlings are, especially when they are weary and out of humour, and must be got to sleep. Those that are joined to the church must be treated thus affectionately: the Great Shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and so must the under-shepherds, that they may not be discouraged. Profelytes shall be favourites. (2.) God will himself be their powerful comforter; *As one whom his mother comforteth when he is sick or sore, or upon any account in sorrow, so will I comfort you;* not only with the rational arguments which a prudent father useth, but with the tender affections and compassions of a loving mother, that bemoans her afflicted child when it has fallen and hurt itself, that she may quiet it and make it easy; or endeavours to pacify it after the has chidden it and fallen out with it. See Jer. xxxi. 20. *Since I spake against him, my bowels are troubled for him;* he is a dear son, he is a pleasant child: Thus the mother comforts. Thus ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem, in the favours bestowed on the church, which you shall partake of, and in the thanksgivings offered by the church which you shall

concur

concur with. (3.) They shall feel the blessed effects of this comfort in their own souls, *ver. 14. When ye see this, what a happy state the church is restored to, not only your tongues and your countenances, but your hearts shall rejoice.* This was fulfilled in the wonderful satisfaction which Christ's disciples had in the success of their ministry; Christ with an eye to that tells them, *John xvi. 22. Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.* Then your bones, that were dried and withered, the marrow of them quite exhausted, shall recover a youthful strength and vigour, and shall flourish like an herb. Divine comforts reach the inward man, they are marrow and moistening to the bones, *Prov. iii. 8.* The bones are the strength of the body; those shall be made to flourish with these comforts; *The joy of the Lord will be your strength, Nehem. viii. 10.*

15. ¶ For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. 16. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many. 17. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD. 18. For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. 19. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. 20. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. 21. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. 22. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. 23. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. 24. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched: and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

These verses, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a dark side towards the enemies of God's kingdom, and all that are rebels against his crown, and a bright side towards his faithful loyal subjects. Probably, it refers to the Jews in captivity in Babylon, of whom some are said to have been sent thither for their hurt; and those are they with whom God here threatens to proceed in his controversy, who hated to be reformed, and therefore should be ruined by the calamity, *Jer. xxiv. 9.* Others were sent thither for their good, and they should have the trouble sanctified to them, should in due time get through it, and see many a good day after it. Divers of the expressions here used are accommodated to that glorious dispensation: But doubtless it looks farther, to the judgment for which Christ did come once, and will come again into this world; and to the distinction which his word in both makes between the precious and the vile.

1. Christ will appear to the confusion and terror of all those that stand it out against him: Sometimes in temporal judgment; the Jews that persisted in infidelity were cut off by fire and by sword; the ruin was very extensive, the Lord then pleaded with all flesh; and it being his sword with which they are cut off, they are called his slain, sacrificed to his justice: And they shall be many. In the great day the wrath of God will be his fire and sword, with which he will cut off and consume all the impenitent; and his word, when it takes hold of sinners' consciences, burns like fire, and is sharper than any two-edged sword. Idolaters will especially be contended with in the day of wrath, *ver. 17.* Perhaps some of those who returned out of Babylon, retained such instances of idolatry and superstition as are here mentioned; had their idols in their gardens (not daring to set them up publicly in the high places) and there purified themselves, as the worshippers of the true God used to do, when they went about their idolatrous rites, one after another, or, as we read it, behind one tree in the midst; behind Ahad or Ehad, some idol that they worshipped by that name; and in honour of which they eat swine's flesh, which was expressly forbidden by the law of God; and other abominations, as the mouse, or some other like animal. But it may refer to all those judgments which the wrath of God, according to the word of God, will bring upon provoking sinners, that live in contempt of God, and are devoted to the world and the flesh, they shall be consumed together. From the happiness of heaven we find expressly excluded all idolaters, and whosoever worketh abomination, *Rev. xxi. 27.—xxii. 15.* In the day of vengeance secret wickedness will be brought to light, and brought to the account; for, *ver. 18. I know their works, and their thoughts;* God knows both what men do, and from what principle, and with what design they do it; and therefore is fit to judge the world, because he can judge the secrets of men, *Rom. ii. 16.*

2. He will appear to the comfort and joy of all that are faithful to him in the setting up of his kingdom in this world, the kingdom of grace, the earnest and first-fruits of the kingdom of glory. The time shall come that he will gather all nations and tongues to himself, that they might come and see his glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, *ver. 18.* This was fulfilled when all nations were to be disciples, and the gift of tongues bestowed in order thereunto. The church had hitherto been confined to one nation, and in one tongue only God was worshipped; but in the days of the Messiah the partition-wall shall be taken down, and those that had been strangers to God shall be brought acquainted with him, and shall see his glory in the gospel as the Jews had seen it in the sanctuary. As to this, it is here promised,

1. That some of the Jewish nation should by the grace of God be distinguished from the rest, and marked for salvation: I will not only set up a gathering ensign among them, to which the Gentiles shall seek, as is promised, *chap. xi. 12.* but there shall be those among them on whom I will set a differing sign; for so the word signifies. Though they are a corrupt, degenerate nation, yet God will set apart a remnant of them, that shall be devoted to him, and employed for him, and a mark shall be set upon them, with such certainty will God own them, *Ezek. ix. 4.* The servants of God, shall be sealed in their foreheads, *Rev. vii. 3.* The Lord knows them that are his; Christ's sheep are marked.

2. That those who are themselves distinguished thus by the grace of God, shall be commissioned to invite others to come and take the benefit of that grace: Those that escape the power of those prejudices by which the generality of that nation is kept in unbelief, they shall be sent unto the nations, to carry the gospel among them, and preach it to every creature. Note, Those who themselves have escaped the wrath to come, should do all they can to snatch others also as brands out of the burning. God chooseth to send those on his errands that can deliver their message feelingly and experimentally, and warn people of their danger by sin, as those who have themselves narrowly escaped the danger. (1.) They shall be sent unto the nations, divers of which are here named, Tarshish, and Pul, and Lud, &c. It is uncertain, nor are interpreters agreed, what countries are here intended; Tarshish signifies in general the sea, yet some take it for Tarsus in Cilicia; Pul is mentioned sometimes as the name of one of the kings of Assyria, perhaps some part of that country might likewise bear that name; Lud is supposed to be Lydia, a warlike nation, famed for archers; the Lydians are said to handle and bend the bow, *Jer. xlv. 9.* Tubal, some think, is Italy or Spain; and Javan most agree to be Greece, the Iones, and the isles of the Gentiles, that were peopled by the posterity of Japheth, *Gen. x. 5.* probably are here meant by the isles afar off, that have not heard my name, neither have seen my glory: In Judah only God was known, and there only his name was great for many ages; other countries sat in darkness, heard not the joyful sound, saw not the joyful light. This deplorable state of their's seems to be spoken of here with compassion; for it is pity that any of the children of men should be at such a distance from their Maker as not to hear his name, and see his glory. In consideration of this (2.) Those that are sent to the nations shall go upon God's errand, to declare his glory among the Gentiles; the Jews that shall be dispersed among the nations shall declare the glory of God's providence concerning their nation all along, by which many shall be invited to join with them, as also by the appearances of God's glory among them in his ordinances; some out of all languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, entreating him to take notice of them, to admit them into his company, and to stay a little while for them, till they are ready; for we will go with you, having heard that God is with you, *Zech. viii. 23.* Thus the glory of God was in part declared among the Gentiles; but more clearly and fully by the apostles and preachers of the gospel, who were sent into all the world, even to the isles afar off, to publish the glorious gospel of the blessed God. They went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, *Mark xvi. 20.*

3. That many converts shall hereby be made, *ver. 20. They shall bring all your brethren* (for proselytes ought to be owned and embraced as brethren) *for an offering unto the Lord.* God's glory shall not be in vain declared to them, but by it they shall be both invited and directed to join themselves to the Lord. They that are sent to them shall succeed so well in their negotiation, that thereupon there shall be as great flocking to Jerusalem as used to be at the time of a solemn feast, when all the males from all parts of the country were to attend there, and not to appear empty. Observe, (1.) The conveniences that they shall be furnished with for their coming; some shall come upon horses, because they came from far, and the journey was too long to travel on foot, as the Jews usually did to their feasts. Persons of quality shall come in chariots, and the aged and sickly, and little children shall be brought in litters or covered waggons; and the young men on mules and swift beasts. This intimates their zeal and forwardness to come; they shall spare no trouble or charge to get to Jerusalem; those that cannot ride on horse-back shall come in litters; and in such haste shall they be, and so impatient of delay, and those that can shall ride upon mules and swift-beasts. These expressions are figurative, and these various means of conveyance are heaped up to intimate (saith the learned Mr. Gataker) the plentiful affording of all gracious helps requisite for the bringing of God's elect home to Christ. All shall be welcome, and nothing shall be wanting for their assistance and encouragement. (2.) The character under which they shall be brought; they shall come, not as formerly they used to come to Jerusalem, to be offerers, but to be themselves an offering unto the Lord, which must be understood spiritually, of their being presented to God as living sacrifices, *Rom. xii. 1.* The apostle explains this, and perhaps refers to it, *Rom. xv. 16.* where he speaks of his ministering the gospel to the Gentiles, that the offering up, or sacrificing of the Gentiles might be acceptable. They shall offer themselves, and those that are the instruments of their conversation shall offer them as the spoils they have taken for Christ, and which are devoted to his service and honour. They shall be brought as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel, with great care that they be holy, purified from sin, and sanctified to God. It is said of the converted Gentiles, *Acts xv. 9.* that their hearts were purified by faith. Whatever was brought to God was brought in a clean vessel, a vessel appropriated to religious uses. God will be loved and honoured in the way that he has appointed, in the ordinances of his own institution, which are the proper vehicles for these spiritual offerings. And when the soul is offered up to God, the body must be a clean vessel for it, possessed in justification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness, *1 Thess. iv. 5.* And converts to Christ are not only purged from an evil conscience, but have their bodies also washed with pure water, *Heb. x. 22.*

Now this may refer, (1.) To the Jews, devout men, and proselytes out of every nation under heaven, that flocked together to Jerusalem, expecting the kingdom of the Messiah to appear, *Acts ii. 5, 6—10.* They came from all parts to the holy mountain of Jerusalem, as an offering to the Lord, and there many of them were brought to the faith of Christ, by the gift of tongues poured out upon the apostles. Methinks there is some correspondence between that history and this prophecy. The eunuch some time after came to worship at Jerusalem in his chariot, and took home with him the knowledge of Christ and his holy religion. (2.) To the Gentiles, some of all nations, that should be converted to Christ, and so added to his church, which, though a spiritual accession, is often in prophecy represented by a local motion: The apostle saith of all true Christians, that they are come to mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem, *Heb. xii. 22.* which explains this here, and shews that the meaning of all this parade is only that they shall be brought into the church by the grace of God, and in the use of the means of that grace, as carefully, and safely, and comfortably as if they were carried in chariots and litters. Thus God shall persuade Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, *Gen. ix. 27.*

4. That a gospel ministry shall be set up in the church, it being thus enlarged

enlarged by the addition of such a multitude of members to it, *ver. 21. I will take of them, of the proselytes, of the Gentile converts, for priests, and for Levites, to minister in holy things and to preside in their religious assemblies, which is very necessary for doctrine, worship, and discipline.* Hitherto the priests and Levites were all taken from among the Jews, and were all of one tribe: but in gospel times God will take of the converted Gentiles to minister to him in holy things, to teach the people, and to bless them in the name of the Lord, and to be the stewards of the mysteries of God, as the priests and the Levites were under the law; to be pastors and teachers, or bishops, to give themselves to the word and prayer; and deacons to serve tables, and, as the Levites, to take care of the outward business of the house of God, *Phil. i. 1. Acts vi. 2, 3, 4.* The apostles were all Jews, and so were the seventy disciples; the great apostle of the Gentiles was himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews; but when churches were planted among the Gentiles, they had ministers settled that were of themselves elders in every church, *Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5.* which made the ministry to spread the more easily, and to be the more familiar, and if not the more venerable, yet the more acceptable; gospel-grace, it might be hoped, would cure people of those corruptions which kept a prophet from having honour in his own country. God faith, *I will take, not all of them, though they are all in a spiritual sense made to our God kings and priests, but of them, some of them.* It is God's work originally to choose ministers, by qualifying them for, and inclining them to the service, as well as to make ministers by giving them their commission. I will take them, *i. e.* I will admit them, though Gentiles, and will accept of them and their ministrations. This is a great honour and advantage to the Gentile church, as it was to the Jewish church, that God raised up of their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites, *Amos ii. 11.*

5. That the church and ministry being thus settled shall continue and be kept up in a succession from one generation to another, *ver. 22.* The change that will be made by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah is here described to be, (1.) A very great and universal change; it shall be a new world, the new heavens, and the new earth, promised before, *chap. lxxv. 17.* *Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new,* *2 Cor. v. 17.* the old covenant of peculiarity set aside, and a new covenant, a covenant of grace established, *Heb. viii. 13.* We are now to serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, *Rom. vii. 6.* New commandments are given relating both to heaven and earth, and new promises relating to both, and both together make a New Testament; so that they are new heavens and a new earth that God will create, and so a preparative for the new heavens and a new earth designed at the end of time, *2 Pet. iii. 13.* (2.) A change of God's own making; he will create the new heavens and the new earth. The change was made by him that had authority to make new ordinances, as well as power to make new worlds. (3.) It will be an abiding, lasting change; a change never to be changed; a new world that will always be new, and never wax old, as that which is ready to vanish away doth. It shall remain before me unalterable; for the gospel dispensation is to continue to the end of time, and not to be succeeded by any other. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom that cannot be moved; the laws and privileges of it are things which cannot be shaken, but shall for ever remain, *Heb. xii. 27, 28.* It shall therefore remain, because it is before God; it is under his eye, and care, and special protection. (4.) It will be maintained in a seed that shall serve Christ; your seed, and in them your name shall remain. A seed of ministers, a seed of Christians; as one generation of both passeth away, another generation shall come; and thus the name of Christ, with that of Christians, shall continue on earth while the earth remains, and his throne as the days of heaven. The gates of hell, though they fight against the church, shall not prevail, nor wear out the saints of the most high.

6. That the public worship of God in religious assemblies shall be carefully and constantly attended upon by all that are thus brought as an offering to the Lord, *ver. 23.* This is described in expressions suited to the Old Testament dispensation, to shew, that though the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the temple service at an end, yet God should be still as regularly, and constantly, and acceptably worshipped as ever. Heretofore Jews only went up to appear before God, and they were bound to attend only three times a year, and the males only; but now all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, women as well as men, shall come and worship before God in his presence, though not in his temple at Jerusalem, but in religious assemblies dispersed all the world over, which shall be to them as the tabernacle of meeting was to the Jews. God will in them record his name, and though

but two or three come together he will be among them, will meet them, and bless them. And they shall have the benefit of these holy convocations frequently, every new moon, and every sabbath, not as formerly at the three annual feasts only. There is no necessity of one certain place, as the temple was of old; Christ is our temple, in whom by faith all believers meet, and now the church is so far extended, it is impossible that all should meet at one place; but it is fit there should be a certain time appointed, that the service may be done certainly, and done frequently, and a token thereby given of the spiritual communion which all Christian assemblies have with each other, by faith, hope, and holy love. The new moons and the sabbaths are mentioned, because under the law, though the yearly feasts were to be celebrated at Jerusalem, yet the new moons and the sabbaths were religiously observed all the country over, in the schools of the prophets first, and afterwards in the synagogues, *2 Kings iv. 23. Amos viii. 5. Acts xv. 21.* according to the model of which Christian assemblies seem to be formed. Where the Lord's day is weekly sanctified, and the Lord's supper monthly celebrated, and both duly attended on, there this promise is fulfilled, there the Christian new moons and sabbaths are observed. See here, that God is to be worshipped in solemn assemblies; that it is the duty of all, as they have opportunity, to wait upon God in those assemblies; all flesh must come, though flesh, weak and corrupt, and sinful, let them come that the flesh may be mortified. In worshipping God we present ourselves before him, and are in a special manner in his presence. For doing this there ought to be stated times, and are so, and we must see that it is our interest, as well as our duty, constantly and conscientiously to observe these times.

7. That their thankful sense of God's distinguishing favour to them should be very much increased by the consideration of the fearful doom and destruction of those that persist and perish in their infidelity and impiety, *ver. 24.* They that have been worshipping the Lord of hosts, and rejoicing before him in the goodness of his house, to affect themselves the more with their own happiness, shall take a view of the misery of the wicked. Observe, (1.) Who they are, whose misery is here described; they are men that have transgressed against God, not only broken his laws, but broken covenant with him, and thought themselves able to contend with him. It may be meant especially of the unbelieving Jews that rejected the gospel of Christ. (2.) What their misery is; it is here represented by the frightful spectacle of a field of battle, covered with the carcasses of the slain, that lie rotting above ground, full of worms crawling about them, and feeding on them; and if you go to burn them, they are so scattered, and it is such a noisome piece of work to get them together, that it would be endless, and the fire would never be quenched; so that they are an abhorring to all flesh, nobody cares to come near them. Now this is sometimes accomplished in temporal judgments, and perhaps never nearer the letter than in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans; in which destruction it is computed that above two millions, first and last, were cut off by the sword, besides what perished by famine and pestilence. It may refer likewise to the spiritual judgments that came upon the unbelieving Jews, which St. Paul looks upon, and shews us, *Rom. xi. 8, &c.* They became dead in sin, twice dead, the church of the Jews was a carcass of a church, all its members were putrid carcasses, their worm died not, their own consciences made them continually uneasy; and the fire of their rage against the gospel was not quenched, which was their punishment as well as their sin; and they became more than ever any nation under the sun, an abhorring to all flesh. But our Saviour applies it to the everlasting misery and torment of unrepentant sinners in the future state; where their worms dies not, and their fire is not quenched. Mark ix. 44. for the soul, whose conscience is its constant tormentor, is immortal; and the God, whose wrath is its constant terror is eternal. (3.) What notice shall be taken of it; they that worship God shall go forth and look upon them, to affect their own hearts with the love of their Redeemer, when they see what misery they are redeemed from. As it will aggravate the miseries of the damned to see others in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves thrust out, *Luke xiii. 28.* so it will illustrate the joys and glories of the blessed in see what comes of them that died in their transgression, and it will elevate their praises to think that they were themselves as brands plucked out of that burning. To the honour of that free grace which thus distinguished them, let the redeemed of the Lord with all humility, and not without a holy trembling, sing their triumphant songs.

THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.



AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

J E R E M I A H.

The Prophecies of the Old Testament, as the Epistles of the New, are placed rather according to their bulk than their seniority; the longest first, not the eldest. There were divers prophets, and writing ones, that were cotemporaries with Isaiah, as Micah, or a little before him, as Hosea, and Joel, and Amos; or soon after him, as Habakkuk and Nahum are supposed to be; and yet the prophecy of Jeremiah, who began many years after Isaiah finished, is placed next to his, because there is so much in it: where we meet with most of God's word, there let the preference be given, and yet those of lesser gifts are not to be despised or excluded. Nothing now occurs to be observed farther concerning prophecy in general; but concerning this prophet Jeremiah we may observe, (1.) That he was sometimes a prophet; he began young, and therefore could say it from his own experience, that it is good for a man to *bear the yoke in his youth*, the yoke both of service and of affliction, *Lam. iii. 27.* Jerom observes, that Isaiah, who had more years over his head, had his tongue touched with a coal of fire, to purge away his iniquity, *chap. vi. 7.* but when God touched Jeremiah's mouth, who was yet but young, nothing was said of the purging of his iniquity, *chap. i. 9.* because, by reason of his tender years, he had not so much sin to answer for. (2.) That he continued long a prophet; some reckon fifty years, others above forty. He began in the thirteenth year of Josiah, when things went well under that good king, but he continued through all the wicked reigns that followed: for when we set out for the service of God, though the wind may then be fair and favourable, we know not how soon it may turn and be tempestuous. (3.) That he was a reproving prophet, was sent in God's name to tell Jacob of their sins, and to warn them of the judgments of God that were coming upon them; and the critics observe, that therefore his stile and manner of speaking is more plain and rough, and less polite than that of Isaiah and some others of the prophets. Those that are sent to discover sin ought to lay aside the enticing words of man's wisdom. Plain-dealing is best when we are dealing with sinners to bring them to repentance. (4.) That he was a weeping prophet; so he is commonly called, not only because he penned the Lamentations, but because he was all along a mournful spectator of the sins of his people, and of the desolating judgments that were coming upon them. And for this reason perhaps those who imagined our Saviour to be one of the prophets, thought him of any of them to be most like to Jeremiah, *Matt. xvi. 14.* because he was *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.* (5.) That he was a suffering prophet; he was persecuted by his own people more than any of them, as we shall find in the story of this book; for he lived and preached just before the Jews' destruction by the Chaldeans, when their character seems to have been the same as it was just before their destruction by the Romans, when they *killed the Lord Jesus, and persecuted his disciples, pleased not God, and were contrary to all men, for wrath was come upon them to the uttermost,* *1. Thess. ii. 15, 16.* The last account we have of him in his history, is, that the remaining Jews forced him to go down with them into Egypt: whereas the current tradition is among Jews and Christians that he suffered martyrdom. Hottinger, out of Elmakin, an Arabic historian, relates, that he continuing to prophesy in Egypt against the Egyptians and other nations, he was stoned to death; and that long after when Alexander entered Egypt, he took up the bones of Jeremiah, where they were buried in obscurity, and carried them to Alexandria, and buried them there. The prophecies of this book, which we have in the nineteen first chapters, seem to be the heads of the sermons he preached in a way of general reproof for sin, and denunciation of judgment; afterwards they are more particular and occasional, and mixed with the history of his day; but not placed in due order of time. With the threatenings many gracious promises are intermixed of mercy to the penitent, of the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity, and some that have a plain reference to the kingdom of the Messiah. Among the Apocryphal writings there is extant an epistle said to be written by Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, warning them against the worship of idols, by exposing the vanity of idols, and the folly of idolaters: It is in *Baruch*, chap. vi. But it is supposed not to be authentic; nor has it, methinks, any thing like the life and spirit of Jeremiah's writings. It is also related concerning Jeremiah, *2 Maccab. ii. 4.* that when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans, he, by direction from God, took the ark and the altar of incense, and carried them to mount Nebo, lodged them in a hollow cave there, and stopped the door; but some that followed him, and thought they had marked the place, could not find it; he blamed them for seeking it, telling them the place should be unknown, till the time that God should gather his people together again. But I know not what credit is to be given to that story, though it is there said to be found in the records. We cannot but be concerned in the reading of Jeremiah's prophecies, to find that they were so little regarded by the men of that generation, but let us make use of that as a reason why we should regard them the more; for they are written for our learning too, and for warning to us and to our land.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The general inscription or title of this book; with the time of the continuance of Jeremiah's public ministry, ver. 1—3. (2.) The call of Jeremiah to the prophetic office, his modest objection against it answered, and an ample commission given him for the execution of it, ver. 4—10. (3.) The visions of an almond-rod and a seething-pot, signifying the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, ver. 11—16. (4.) Encouragement given to the prophet to go on undauntedly in his work, in an assurance of God's presence with him, ver. 17—19. Thus is he set to work by one that will be sure to bear him out.

1. **T**HE words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: 2. To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

We have here as much as it was thought fit we should have of the genealogy of this prophet, and the chronology of his prophecy.

1. We are told what family the prophet was of. He was the son of Hilkiah, it is supposed, not that Hilkiah that was high-priest in Josiah's time (for then he would have been called so, and not as here, one of the priests that were in Anathoth) but another of the same name. Jeremiah signifies one raised up by the Lord; it is said of Christ that he is a prophet whom the Lord our God raised up unto us, *Deut. xviii. 15—18.* He was of the priests, and as a priest was authorized and appointed to teach the people; but to that authority and appointment God added the extraordinary commission of a prophet. Ezekiel also was a priest. Thus God would support the honour of the priesthood, at a time when, by their sins and God's judgments upon them, it was sadly eclipsed. He was of the priests in

Anathoth; a city of priests, which lay about three miles from Jerusalem; Abiathar had his country house there, *2 Kings ii. 26.*

2. We have the general date of his prophecies, the knowledge of which is requisite to the understanding of them. (1.) He began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, ver. 2. Josiah in the twelfth year of his reign began a work of reformation, applied himself with all sincerity to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the images, *2 Chron. xxxiv. 3.* And very seasonably then was this young prophet raised up to assist and encourage the young king in that good work. Then the word of the Lord came to him, not only a charge and commission to him to prophesy, but a revelation of the things themselves which he was to deliver. As it is an encouragement to ministers to be countenanced and protected by such pious magistrates as Josiah was, so it is a great help to magistrates in any good work of reformation to be advised and animated, and to have a great deal of their work done for them by their faithful, zealous ministers, as Jeremiah was. Now he would have expected when these two joined forces, such a prince and such a prophet (as in a like case, *Ezra v. 1, 2.*) and both young, such a complete reformation should have been brought about and settled, as would have prevented the ruin of the church and state; but it proved quite otherwise. In the eighteenth year of Josiah we find there were a great many of the relics of idolatry, that were not purged out; for what can the best princes and prophets do to prevent the ruin of a people that hate to be reformed? And therefore, though it was a time of reformation, Jeremiah continued to foretel the destroying judgments that were coming upon them; for there is no symptom more threatening to any people than fruitless attempts of reformation; Josiah and Jeremiah would have healed them, but they would not be healed. (2.) He continued to prophesy through the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who reigned eleven years apiece; he prophesied to the carrying away of Jerusalem captive, ver. 3. that great event which he had so often prophesied of. He continued to prophesy after that, *chap. xl. 1.* But the computation here is made to end with that, because it was the accomplishment of many of his predictions; and from the thirteenth of Josiah to the captivity was just forty years. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that as Moses was so long with the people a teacher in the wilderness, till they entered into their own land, Jeremy was so long in their own land a teacher before they went into the wilderness of the heathen; and he thinks that therefore a special mark is set upon the last forty years of the iniquity of Judah, which Ezekiel bore forty days, a day for a year, because during all that time they had Jeremiah prophesying among them, which was a great aggravation of their impenitency,

impenitency. God, in this prophet suffered their manners, their ill manners forty years, and at length swore in his wrath that they should not continue in his rest.

4. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 5. Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. 6. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold I cannot speak: for I am a child. 7. ¶ But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. 8. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. 9. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. 10. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Here is, 1. Jeremiah's early designation to the work and office of a prophet, which God gives him notice of as a reason for his early application to that business, *ver. 4, 5.* The word of the Lord came to him, with a satisfying assurance to himself that it was the word of the Lord, and not a delusion; and God told him, (1.) That he had ordained him a prophet to the nations, or against the nations; the nation of the Jews in the first place, who are therefore now reckoned among the nations, because they had learned their works, and mingled themselves with them in their idolatries, which otherwise they should not have been, *Numb. xxiii. 9.* Yet he was given to be a prophet, not to the Jews only, but to the neighbour nations; to whom he was to send yokes, chap. xxvii. 3. and whom he must make to drink of the cup of the Lord's anger, chap. xxv. 17. He is still in his writings a prophet to the nations (to our nation among the rest) to tell them what the national judgments are which may be expected for national sins. It would be well for the nations would they take Jeremiah for their prophet, and attend to the warnings he gives them. (2.) That before he was born, even in his eternal counsel, he had designed him to be so. Let him know, that he who gave him this commission is the same that gave him his being, that formed him in the belly, and brought him forth out of the womb, and therefore was his rightful owner, and might employ him, and make use of him as he pleased. And that this commission was given him in pursuance of the purpose God had purposed in himself concerning him before he was born. *I knew thee, and I sanctified thee, i. e.* I determined that thou shouldst be a prophet, and set thee apart for the office; thus St. Paul saith of himself, that God had separated him from his mother's womb to be a Christian and an apostle, *Gal. i. 15.* Observe, (1.) The great Creator knows what use to make of every man before he makes him; he has made all for himself, and of the same lump of clay designs a vessel of honour or dishonour as he pleaseth *Rom. ix. 21.* (1.) What God has designed men for he will call them to, for his purposes cannot be frustrated. Known unto God are all his own works beforehand, and his knowledge is infallible, and his purpose unchangeable. (3.) There is a particular purpose and providence of God conversant about his prophets and ministers; they are by special counsel designed for their work, and what they are designed for, they are fitted for; I that knew thee sanctified thee. God destines them to it, and forms them for it, then when he first forms the spirit of man within him. *Propheta nascitur, non fit.*

3. His modest declining of this honourable employment, *ver. 6.* Though God had predestinated him to it, yet it was news to him, and a mighty surprise to hear that he should be a prophet to the nations; we know not what God intends us for, but he knows. One would have thought he should have caught at it as a piece of preferment, for so it was, but he objects against it disables himself; Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak to great men and multitudes, as a prophet must; I cannot speak fine or fluently, cannot word things well, as a message from God should be worded; I cannot speak with any authority, nor can expect to be heeded, for I am a child, and my youth will be despised. Note, It becomes us when we have any service to do for God to be afraid, lest we mismanage it, and lest it suffer through our weakness and unfitness for it; it becomes us likewise to have low thoughts of ourselves, and to be diffident of our own sufficiency. Those that are young should consider that they are so, should be afraid, as Elihu was, and not venture beyond their strength.

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2. To speak powerfully, and as one that had authority from God, *ver. 10.* It is a strange commission that is here given him. See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, which sounds very great, and yet Jeremiah is a poor despicable priest still; he is not set over the kingdoms as a prince to rule them by the sword, but as a prophet by the power of the word of God. Those that would from hence prove the Pope's supremacy over kings, and his authority to depose them, and dispose of their kingdoms at his pleasure, must prove that he has the same extraordinary spirit of prophecy that Jeremiah had, else how can he have the power that Jeremiah had by virtue of that spirit; and yet the power that Jeremiah had, who notwithstanding his power lived in meanness and contempt, and under oppression, would not content those proud men. Jeremiah was set over the nations, the Jewish nation in the first place, and other nations, some great ones besides, against whom he prophesied; was set over them not to demand tribute from them, or enrich himself with their spoils, but to root out, and pull down, and destroy, and yet withal to build and plant. (1.) He must attempt to reform the nations, to root out, and pull down, and destroy idolatry and other wickednesses among them, to extirpate those vicious habits and customs which had long taken root, to throw down the kingdom of sin, that religion and virtue might be planted and built among them. And to the introducing and establishing of that which is good, it is necessary that that which is evil be removed. (2.) He must tell them that it would be well or ill with them according as they were or were not reformed. He must set before them life and death, good and evil, according to God's declaration of the method he takes with kingdoms and nations, *Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10.* He must assure those who persisted in their wickedness that they should be rooted out and destroyed, and those who repented that they should be built and planted; he was authorised to read the doom of nations, and God would ratify it and fulfil it, *Isa. xlv. 23.* would do it according to his word, and therefore is said to do it by his word. It is thus expressed, partly to shew how sure the word of prophecy is, it will be as certainly accomplished as if it were done already; and partly to put an honour upon the prophetic office, and make it look truly great, that others may not despise prophets, nor they disparage themselves. And yet more honourably doth the gospel ministry look in that declarative power Christ gave his apostles to remit and retain sin, *John xx. 23.* to bind and loose, *Matt. xviii. 18.*

11. ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said I see a rod of an almond-tree. 12. Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it. 13. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething-pot; and the face thereof is toward the north. 14. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. 15. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. 16. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. 17. ¶ Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. 18. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. 19. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Here, 1. God gives Jeremiah, in vision, a view of the principal errand he was to go upon, which was to foretel the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for their sins, especially their idolatry. This was at first represented to him in a way proper to make an impression upon him, that he might have it upon his heart in all his dealings with this people.

(1.) He intimates to him that the people were ripening apace for ruin, and ruin was hastening apace towards them. God having answered his objection, that he was a child, goes on to initiate him in the prophetic learning and language; and having promised to enable him to speak intelligibly to the people, he here teaches him to understand what God saith to him; for prophets must have eyes in their heads as well as tongues; must be seers as well as speakers; he therefore asks him, Jeremiah what seest thou? Look about thee and observe now; and he was soon aware what was presented to him, I see a rod, noting affliction and chastisement; a correcting rod hanging over us; and it is a rod of an almond-tree, which is one of the forwardest trees in the spring; it is in the bud and blossom presently, when other trees are scarce broken out; it flourisheth, saith Pliny, in the month of January, and by March hath ripe fruits; hence it is called in the Hebrew

AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
Upon the Book of the PROPHET
J E R E M I A H.

The Prophecies of the Old Testament, as the Epistles of the New, are placed rather according to their bulk than their seniority; the longest first, not the eldest. There were divers prophets, and writing ones, that were contemporaries with Isaiah, as Micah, or a little before him, as Hosea, and Joel, and Amos: or soon after him, as Habakkuk and Nahum are supposed to be; and yet the prophecy of Jeremiah, who began many years after Isaiah finished, is placed next to his, because there is so much in it: where we meet with most of God's word, there let the preference be given, and yet those of lesser gifts are not to be despised or excluded. Nothing now occurs to be observed farther concerning prophecy in general; but concerning this prophet Jeremiah we may observe, (1.) That he was sometimes a prophet; he began young, and therefore could say it from his own experience, that it is good for a man to *bear the yoke in his youth*, the yoke both of service and of affliction, *Lam. iii. 27.* Jerom observes, that Isaiah, who had more years over his head, had his tongue touched with a coal of fire, to purge away his iniquity, *chap. vi. 7.* but when God touched Jeremiah's mouth, who was yet but young, nothing was said of the purging of his iniquity, *chap. i. 9.* because, by reason of his tender years, he had not so much sin to answer for. (2.) That he continued long a prophet; some reckon fifty years, others above forty. He began in the thirteenth year of Josiah, when things went well under that good king, but he continued through all the wicked reigns that followed: for when we set out for the service of God, though the wind may then be fair and favourable, we know not how soon it may turn and be tempestuous. (3.) That he was a reproving prophet, was sent in God's name to tell Jacob of their sins, and to warn them of the judgments of God that were coming upon them; and the critics observe, that therefore his stile and manner of speaking is more plain and rough, and less polite than that of Isaiah and some others of the prophets. Those that are sent to discover sin ought to lay aside the enticing words of man's wisdom. Plain-dealing is best when we are dealing with sinners to bring them to repentance. (4.) That he was a weeping prophet; so he is commonly called, not only because he penned the Lamentations, but because he was all along a mournful spectator of the sins of his people, and of the desolating judgments that were coming upon them. And for this reason perhaps those who imagined our Saviour to be one of the prophets, thought him of any of them to be most like to Jeremiah, *Matt. xvi. 14.* because he was *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.* (5.) That he was a suffering prophet; he was persecuted by his own people more than any of them, as we shall find in the story of this book; for he lived and preached just before the Jews' destruction by the Chaldeans, when their character seems to have been the same as it was just before their destruction by the Romans, when they *killed the Lord Jesus, and persecuted his disciples, pleased not God, and were contrary to all men, for wrath was come upon them to the uttermost*, 1. *Thess. ii. 15, 16.* The last account we have of him in his history, is, that the remaining Jews forced him to go down with them into Egypt: whereas the current tradition is among Jews and Christians that he suffered martyrdom. Hottinger, out of Elmakin, an Arabic historian, relates, that he continuing to prophesy in Egypt against the Egyptians and other nations, he was stoned to death; and that long after when Alexander entered Egypt, he took up the bones of Jeremiah, where they were buried in obscurity, and carried them to Alexandria, and buried them there. The prophecies of this book, which we have in the nineteen first chapters, seem to be the heads of the sermons he preached in a way of general reproof for sin, and denunciation of judgment; afterwards they are more particular and occasional, and mixed with the history of his day; but not placed in due order of time. With the threatenings many gracious promises are intermixed of mercy to the penitent, of the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity, and some that have a plain reference to the kingdom of the Messiah. Among the Apocryphal writings there is extant an epistle said to be written by Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, warning them against the worship of idols, by exposing the vanity of idols, and the folly of idolaters: It is in *Baruch*, *chap. vi.* But it is supposed not to be authentic; nor has it, methinks, any thing like the life and spirit of Jeremiah's writings. It is also related concerning Jeremiah, 2 *Maccab. ii. 4.* that when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans, he, by direction from God, took the ark and the altar of incense, and carried them to mount Nebo, lodged them in a hollow cave there, and stopped the door; but some that followed him, and thought they had marked the place, could not find it; he blamed them for seeking it, telling them the place should be unknown, till the time that God should gather his people together again. But I know not what credit is to be given to that story, though it is there said to be found in the records. We cannot but be concerned in the reading of Jeremiah's prophecies, to find that they were so little regarded by the men of that generation, but let us make use of that as a reason why we should regard them the more; for they are written for our learning too, and for warning to us and to our land.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The general inscription or title of this book; with the time of the continuance of Jeremiah's public ministry, ver. 1—3. (2.) The call of Jeremiah to the prophetic office, his modest objection against it answered, and an ample commission given him for the execution of it, ver. 4—10. (3.) The visions of an almond-rod and a burning-pot, signifying the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, ver. 11—16. (4.) Encouragement given to the prophet to go on undauntedly in his work, in an assurance of God's presence with him, ver. 17—19. Thus is he set to work by one that will be sure to bear him out.

1. **T**HE words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: 2. To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

We have here as much as it was thought fit we should have of the genealogy of this prophet, and the chronology of his prophecy.

1. We are told what family the prophet was of. He was the son of Hilkiah, it is supposed, not that Hilkiah that was high-priest in Josiah's time (for then he would have been called so, and not as here, one of the priests that were in Anathoth) but another of the same name. Jeremiah signifies one raised up by the Lord; it is said of Christ that he is a prophet whom the Lord our God raised up unto us, *Deut. xviii. 15—18.* He was of the priests, and as a priest was authorised and appointed to teach the people; but to that authority and appointment God added the extraordinary commission of a prophet. Ezekiel also was a priest. Thus God would support the honour of the priesthood, at a time when, by their sins and God's judgments upon them, it was sadly eclipsed. He was of the priests in

Anathoth; a city of priests, which lay about three miles from Jerusalem; Abiathar had his country house there, 2 *Kings ii. 26.*

2. We have the general date of his prophecies, the knowledge of which is requisite to the understanding of them. (1.) He began to prophecy in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, *ver. 2.* Josiah in the twelfth year of his reign began a work of reformation, applied himself with all sincerity to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the images, 2 *Chron. xxxiv. 3.* And very seasonably then was this young prophet raised up to assist and encourage the young king in that good work. Then the word of the Lord came to him, not only a charge and commission to him to prophecy, but a revelation of the things themselves which he was to deliver. As it is an encouragement to ministers to be countenanced and protected by such pious magistrates as Josiah was, so it is a great help to magistrates in any good work of reformation to be advised and animated, and to have a great deal of their work done for them by their faithful, zealous ministers, as Jeremiah was. Now he would have expected when these two joined forces, such a prince and such a prophet (as in a like case, *Ezra v. 1, 2.*) and both young, such a complete reformation should have been brought about and settled, as would have prevented the ruin of the church and state; but it proved quite otherwise. In the eighteenth year of Josiah we find there were a great many of the relics of idolatry, that were not purged out; for what can the best princes and prophets do to prevent the ruin of a people that hate to be reformed? And therefore, though it was a time of reformation, Jeremiah continued to foretel the destroying judgments that were coming upon them; for there is no symptom more threatening to any people than fruitless attempts of reformation; Josiah and Jeremiah would have healed them, but they would not be healed. (2.) He continued to prophecy through the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who reigned eleven years apiece; he prophesied to the carrying away of Jerusalem captive, *ver. 3.* that great event which he had so often prophesied of. He continued to prophecy after that, *chap. xl. 1.* But the computation here is made to end with that, because it was the accomplishment of many of his predictions; and from the thirteenth of Josiah to the captivity was just forty years. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that as Moses was so long with the people a teacher in the wilderness, till they entered into their own land, Jeremy was so long in their own land a teacher before they went into the wilderness of the heathen; and he thinks that therefore a special mark is set upon the last forty years of the iniquity of Judah, which Ezekiel bore forty days, a day for a year, because during all that time they had Jeremiah prophesying among them, which was a great aggravation of their impenitency,

impenitency. God, in this prophet suffered their manners, their ill manners forty years, and at length swore in his wrath that they should not continue in his rest.

4. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 5. Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. 6. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold I cannot speak: for I am a child. 7. ¶ But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. 8. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. 9. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. 10. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

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3. Let him not object that he cannot speak as becomes him, God will enable him to speak.

1. To speak intelligently, and as one that had acquaintance with God, *ver. 9.* He having now a vision of the divine glory, the Lord put forth his hand, and by a sensible sign conferred upon him so much of the gift of the tongue as was necessary for him, he touched his mouth, and with that touch opened his lips that his mouth should shew forth God's praise, with that touch sweetly conveyed his words into his mouth, to be ready to him upon all occasions; so that he could never want words who was thus furnished by him that made man's mouth. God not only put knowledge into his head, but words into his mouth, for there are words which the Holy Ghost taught, *1 Cor. ii. 13.* It is fit God's message should be delivered in his own words, that it may be delivered punctually, *Ezek. iii. 4.* Speak with my words. And those that faithfully do so shall not want instructions as the case requires; God will give them a mouth and wisdom in that same hour, *Matt. x. 19.*

2. To speak powerfully, and as one that had authority from God, *ver. 10.* It is a strange commission that is here given him. See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, which sounds very great, and yet Jeremiah is a poor despicable priest still; he is not set over the kingdoms as a prince to rule them by the sword, but as a prophet by the power of the word of God. Those that would from hence prove the Pope's supremacy over kings, and his authority to depose them, and dispose of their kingdoms at his pleasure, must prove that he has the same extraordinary spirit of prophecy that Jeremiah had, else how can he have the power that Jeremiah had by virtue of that spirit; and yet the power that Jeremiah had, who notwithstanding his power lived in meanness and contempt, and under oppression, would not content those proud men. Jeremiah was set over the nations, the Jewish nation in the first place, and other nations, some great ones besides, against whom he prophesied; was set over them not to demand tribute from them, or enrich himself with their spoils, but to root out, and pull down, and destroy, and yet withal to build and plant. (1.) He must attempt to reform the nations, to root out, and pull down, and destroy idolatry and other wickednesses among them, to extirpate those vicious habits and customs which had long taken root, to throw down the kingdom of sin, that religion and virtue might be planted and built among them. And to the introducing and establishing of that which is good, it is necessary that that which is evil be removed. (2.) He must tell them that it would be well or ill with them according as they were or were not reformed. He must set before them life and death, good and evil, according to God's declaration of the method he takes with kingdoms and nations, *Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10.* He must assure those who persisted in their wickedness that they should be rooted out and destroyed, and those who repented that they should be built and planted; he was authorised to read the doom of nations, and God would ratify it and fulfil it, *Isa. xlv. 23.* would do it according to his word, and therefore is said to do it by his word. It is thus expressed, partly to shew how sure the word of prophecy is, it will be as certainly accomplished as if it were done already; and partly to put an honour upon the prophetic office, and make it look truly great, that others may not despise prophets, nor they disparage themselves. And yet more honourably doth the gospel ministry look in that declarative power Christ gave his apostles to remit and retain sin, *John xx. 23.* to bind and loose, *Matt. xviii. 18.*

11. ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seeest thou? And I said I see a rod of an almond-tree. 12. Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it. 13. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seeest thou? And I said, I see a seething-pot; and the face thereof is toward the north. 14. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. 15. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. 16. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. 17. ¶ Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. 18. For, behold, I have made thee this day a fenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. 19. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Here, 1. God gives Jeremiah, in vision, a view of the principal errand he was to go upon, which was to foretel the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for their sins, especially their idolatry. This was at first represented to him in a way proper to make an impression upon him, that he might have it upon his heart in all his dealings with this people.

(1.) He intimates to him that the people were ripening apace for ruin, and ruin was hastening apace towards them. God having answered his objection, that he was a child, goes on to initiate him in the prophetic learning and language; and having promised to enable him to speak intelligibly to the people, he here teaches him to understand what God saith to him; for prophets must have eyes in their heads as well as tongues; must be seers as well as speakers; he therefore asks him, Jeremiah what seeest thou? Look about thee and observe now; and he was soon aware what was presented to him, I see a rod, noting affliction and chastisement; a correcting rod hanging over us; and it is a rod of an almond-tree, which is one of the forwardest trees in the spring; it is in the bud and blossom presently, when other trees are scarce broken out; it flourisheth, saith Pliny, in the month of January; and by March hath ripe fruits; hence it is called in the Hebrew

brew, *Shakidh*, the *hasty tree*; whether this rod that Jeremiah saw had already budded, as some think, or whether it was stripped and dry, as others think, and yet Jeremiah knew it to be of an almond-tree, as Aaron's rod was, is uncertain; but God explained it in the next word, *ver. 12. Thou hast well seen*. God commended him that he was so observant, and so quick of apprehension as to be aware, though it was the first vision he ever saw, that it was a rod of an almond tree; that his mind was so composed as to be able to distinguish. Prophets have need of good eyes; and those that see well shall be commended, and not those only that speak well. Thou hast seen a hasty tree, that signifies that *I will hasten my word to perform it*. Jeremiah shall prophesy that which he himself shall live to see accomplished. We have the explication of this *Ezek. vii. 10, 11. The rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded, violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness*. The measure of Jerusalem's iniquity fills very fast; and as if their destruction slumbered too long, they waken it, they hasten it, and I will hasten to perform what I have spoken against them.

(2.) He intimates to him whence the intended ruin should arise; Jeremiah is a second time asked, *What he sees?* And he sees a *seething-pot* upon the fire, *ver. 13.* representing Jerusalem and Judah in a mighty toss and commotion, like boiling water, by reason of the descent which the Chaldean army made upon them: made like a fiery oven, *Psalm xxi. 9.* all in a heat, wasting away as boiling water doth, and sensibly evaporating and growing less and less; ready to boil over, to be thrown out of their own city and land, as out of the pan into the fire, from bad to worse. Some think those it offers referred to this, who said, *Ezek. xi. 3. This city is the cauldron, and we be the flesh*. Now the mouth or face of the furnace or hearth, over which this pot boiled, was towards the north; for thence the fire and fuel was to come that must make the pot boil thus. So the vision is explained, *ver. 14. Out of the north an evil shall break forth, or shall be opened*. It had been long designed by the justice of God, and long deserved by the sin of the people, and yet hitherto the divine patience had restrained it, and held it in as it were; the enemies had intended it, and God had checked them; but now all restraints shall be taken off, and the evil shall break forth; the direct scene shall open, and the enemy shall come in like a flood. It shall be an universal calamity, it shall come upon all the inhabitants of the land, from the highest to the lowest, for they have all corrupted their way. Look for this storm to arise out of the north, whence fair weather used to come, *Job xxxvii. 22.* When there was friendship between Hezekiah and the king of Babylon, they promised themselves many advantages out of the north; but it proved quite otherwise, out of the north their trouble arose. Thence sometimes the fiercest tempests come, whence we expect fair weather. This is further explained, *ver. 15.* where we may observe, (1.) The raising of the army that shall invade Judah, and lay it waste; *I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord*. All the northern crowns shall unite under Nebuchadnezzar and join with him in this expedition. They lay dispersed, but God that has all men's hearts in his hand will bring them together; they lie at a distance from Judah, but God that directs all men's steps, will call them, and they shall come, though they be never so far off. God's summons shall be obeyed; they whom he calls shall come. When he has work to do of any kind, he will find instruments to do it, though he send to the utmost parts of the earth for them. And that the armies brought into the field may be sufficiently numerous and strong, he will call not only the kingdoms of the north, but all the families of those kingdoms, into the service; not one able-bodied man shall be left behind. (2.) The advance of this army; the commanders of the troops of the several nations shall take their post in carrying on the siege of Jerusalem, and other the cities of Judah. They shall set every one on his throne or seat. When a city is besieged, we say, *The enemy sits down before it*; they shall encamp some at the entering of the gates, others against the walls round about, to cut off both the going out of the mouths, and the coming in of the meat, and so to starve them.

(3.) He tells them plainly what was the procuring cause of all these judgments; it was the sin of Jerusalem, and of the cities of Judah; *ver. 16. I will pass sentence upon them*, so it may be read; or *give judgment against them*, this sentence, this judgment, because of all their wickedness; that is it that plucks up the flood gates, and lets in this inundation of calamities. They have forsaken God, and revolted from their allegiance to him; and have burnt incense to other gods, new gods, strange gods, and all false gods, pretenders, usurpers, the creatures of their own fancy; and they have worshipped the works of their own hands. Jeremiah was young, had looked but little abroad into the world, and perhaps did not know, nor could have believed what abominable idolatries the children of his people were guilty of; but God tells him, that he might know what to level his reproofs against, and what to ground his threatenings upon, and that he might himself be satisfied in the equity of the sentence, which in God's name he was to pass upon them.

2. God excites and encourageth Jeremiah to apply himself with all diligence and seriousness to his business. A great trust is committed to him; he is sent in God's name as a herald at arms to proclaim war against his rebellious subjects; for God is pleased to give warning of his judgments beforehand, that sinners may be awakened to meet him by repentance, and so turn away his wrath, and that if they do not, they may be left inexcusable. With this trust Jeremiah has a charge given him, *ver. 17. Thou therefore gird up thy loins*; free thyself from all those things that would distract thee for, or hinder thee in this service; buckle to it with readiness and resolution, and be not entangled with doubts about it. He must be quick, arise, and lose no time; he must be busy, arise and speak unto them in season, out of season; he must be bold, *Be not dismayed at their faces*, as before, *ver. 8.* In a word, he must be faithful; it is required of ambassadors that they be so.

In two things he must be faithful. (1.) He must speak all that he is charged with; *Speak all that I command thee*. He must forget nothing as minute or foreign, or not worth mentioning; every word of God is weighty. He must conceal nothing for fear of offending; he must alter nothing under pretence of making it more fashionable or more palatable, but without addition or diminution declare the whole counsel of God. (2.) He must speak to all that he is charged against; he must not whisper it in a corner to a few particular friends that will take it well, but he must appear against the kings of Judah if they be wicked kings, and bear his testimony against the sins even of the princes thereof; for the greatest of men are not exempt from the judgments, either of God's hand or of his mouth. Nay, he must not spare the priests thereof; though he himself was a priest, and was concerned to maintain the dignity of his order, yet he must not therefore flatter them in their sins. He must appear against the people of the land, though they were his own people, as far as they were against the Lord.

And two reasons are here given why he should do thus: 1. Because he had reason to fear the wrath of God, if he should be false; *Be not dismayed at their faces*, so as to desert thine office, or balk the duty of it, *lest I confound and dismay thee before them; lest I raise thee up in thy faint-heartedness*. Those that consult their own credit, ease, and safety, more than their work and

duty, it is just with God to leave them to themselves, and to bring upon them the shame of their own cowardliness. Nay, *lest I reckon with thee for thy faint-heartedness, and break thee to pieces*; so some read it. Therefore this prophet says, *chap. xvii. 17. Lord, Be not thou a terror to me*. Note, The fear of God is the best antidote against the fear of man. Let us always be afraid of offending God, who after he has killed has power to cast into hell, and then we shall be in little danger of fearing the faces of men that can but kill the body, *Luke xii. 4, 5.* See *Nehem. iv. 14.* It is better to have all the men in the world our enemies than God our enemy.

2. Because he had no reason to fear the wrath of man if he were faithful; for the God whom he served would protect him, and bear him out, so that they should neither sink his spirits, nor drive him off from his work; should neither stop his mouth, nor take away his life, till he had finished his testimony, *ver. 19.* This young stripling of a prophet is made by the power of God, as an impregnable city, fortified with iron pillars, and surrounded with walls of brass; he sallies out upon them in reproofs and threatenings, and keeps them in awe. They set upon him on every side; the kings and princes batter him with their power, the priests thunder against him with their church-censures, and the people of the land shoot their arrows at him, even slanderous and bitter words; but he shall keep his ground, and make his part good with them; he shall still be a curb upon them, *ver. 19. They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail, to destroy thee, for I am with thee to deliver thee out of their hands*; nor shall they prevail to defeat the word that God sends them by Jeremiah, nor to deliver themselves, it shall take hold of them, for God is against them to destroy them. Note, Those who are sure they have God with them, as he is if they be with him, they need not, they ought not to be afraid, whoever is against them.

C H A P. II.

It is probable this chapter was Jeremiah's first sermon that he preached after his ordination; and a most lively pathetic sermon it is as any we have in all the books of the prophets; let him not say, I cannot speak, for I am a child; for God having touched his mouth, and put his words into it, none can speak better. The scope of the chapter is to show God's people their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins; it is all by way of reproof and conviction, that they might be brought to repent of their sins, and so prevent the ruin that was coming upon them. The charge drawn up against them is very high, the aggravations black, the arguments used for their conviction very close and pressing, and the expostulations very pungent and affecting. The sin which they are most particularly charged with here is idolatry, forsaking the true God, their own God, for other false gods. Now they are told, (1.) That this was ungrateful to God, who had been so kind to them, *ver. 1—8.* (2.) That it was without precedent, that a nation should change their God, *ver. 9—13.* (3.) That hereby they had disparaged and ruined themselves, *ver. 14—19.* (4.) That they had broken their covenants, and degenerated from their good beginnings, *ver. 20, 21.* (5.) That their wickedness was too plain to be concealed, and too bad to be excused, *ver. 22, 23—25.* (6.) That they persisted wilfully and obstinately in it, and were irreclaimable and indefatigable in their idolatries, *ver. 24, 25—33—36.* (7.) That they shamed themselves by their idolatry, and should shortly be made ashamed of it when they should find their idols unable to help them, *ver. 26—29—37.* (8.) That they had not been convinced and reformed by the rebukes of providence they had been under, *ver. 30.* (9.) That they had put a great contempt upon God, *ver. 31, 32.* (10.) That with their idolatries they had mixed the most unnatural murders, shedding the blood of the poor innocents, *ver. 34.* And those heats were hard indeed that were untouched and unhumbled when their sins were thus set in order before them. O that by meditating on this chapter we might be brought to repent of our spiritual idolatries, giving that place in our souls to the world and the flesh, which should have been reserved for God only.

1. **M**OREOVER the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2. Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. 3. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD. 4. Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: 5. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? 6. Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? 7. And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination. 8. The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

Here is, 1. A command given to Jeremiah to go and carry a message from God to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He was charged in general, *chap. i. 17.* to go and speak to them; here he is particularly charged to go and speak this to them. Note, It is good for ministers by faith and prayer to take out a fresh commission, when they address themselves solemnly to any part of their work. Let a minister carefully compare what he has to deliver with the word of God, and see that it agrees with it, that he may be able to say, not only *The Lord sent me*, but he sent me to speak this. He must go from Arabia, where he lived in a pleasant retirement, spending his time (it is likely) in diversion, and the study of the law, and must make his appearance at Jerusalem, that noisy, tumultuous city, and cry in their ears, as a man in earnest, and that would be heard. Cry aloud that all may hear,

hear, and none may plead ignorance. Go close to them, and cry in the ears of those that have stopped their ears.

2. The message he was commanded to deliver. He must upbraid them with their horrid ingratitude in forsaking a God who had been of old so kind to them; that this might either make them ashamed and bring them to repentance, or might justify God in turning his hand against them.

1. God here puts them in mind of the favours he had of old bestowed upon them, when they were first formed into a people, *ver. 2. I remember for thy sake*, and I would have thee to remember it, and improve the remembrance of it for thy good; I cannot forget *the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals*. This may be understood, (1.) Of the kindness they had for God; it was not such indeed, as they had any reason to boast of, or to plead with God for favour to be shown them, for many of them were very unkind and provoking; and when they did return and enquire early after God they did but flatter him; yet God is pleased to mention it, and plead it with them; for though it was but little love shewed him, he took it kindly. When they believed the Lord and his servant Moses, when they sung God's praises at the Red-sea, when at the foot of mount Sinai, they promised, *all that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient*; then was the kindness of their youth, and the love of their espousals; when they seemed so forward for God, he said, *Surely they are my people, and will be faithful to me, children that will not lie*. Note, Those that begin well and promise fair, but do not perform and persevere, will justly be upbraided with their hopeful and promising beginnings. God remembers the kindness of our youth, and the love of our espousals, the zeal we then seemed to have for him, and the affection wherewith we made our covenants with him; the buds and blossoms that never came to perfection; and it is good for us to remember them, that we may remember whence we have fallen, and return to our first love, *Rev. ii. 4, 5. Gal. iv. 15.*

In two things appeared the kindness of their youth. (1.) That they followed the conduct of the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness; and though sometimes they spoke of returning into Egypt, or pushing forward into Canaan, yet they did neither, but for forty years together went after God in the wilderness, and trusted him to provide for them, though it was a land that was not sown. This God took kindly, and took notice of it to their praise long after that; though much was amiss among them, yet they never forsook the conduct they were under. Thus though Christ often chid his disciples, yet he commended them at parting for continuing with him, *Luke xxii. 28*. It must be the strong affection of the youth, and the espousals that will carry us on to follow God in a wilderness, with an implicit faith, and an entire resignation. And it is pity those that have so followed him should ever leave him. (2.) That they entertained divine institutions, set up the tabernacle among them, and attended the service of it; Israel was then holiness to the Lord; they joined themselves to him in covenant as a peculiar people. Thus they began in the Spirit, and God puts them in mind of it, that for shame they might not end in the flesh.

Or it may be understood, (2.) Of God's kindness to them; and of that he afterwards speaks largely, *When Israel was a child, then I loved him*, *Hosea xi. 1*. He then espoused that people to himself with all the affection with which a young man marries a virgin, *Isa. lxii. 5*. for the time was a time of love, *Ezek. xvi. 8*.

1. God appropriated them to himself; though they were a sinful people, yet by virtue of the covenant made with them, and the church set up among them, they were holiness to the Lord, dedicated to his honour, and taken under his special tuition; they were the first-fruits of his increase, the first constituted church he had in the world; they were the first-fruits, but the full harvest was to be gathered from among the Gentiles. The first-fruits of the increase were God's part of it, were offered to him, and he was honoured with them; so were the people of the Jews; what little tribute, rent, and homage God had from the world, he had it chiefly from them; and it was their honour to be thus set apart from God: This honour have all the saints, they are the first-fruits of his creatures, *James i. 18*.

2. Having espoused them, he espoused their cause, and became an enemy to their enemy, *Exod. xxiii. 22*. Being the first-fruits of his increase, all that devoured him (so it should be read) did offend, they trespassed, they contracted guilt, and evil befel them: as those were reckoned offenders that devoured the first-fruits, or any thing else that was holy to the Lord, that embezzled them, or converted them to their own use, *Rev. v. 15*. Whoever offered any injury to the people of God, it was at their peril; their God was ready to avenge their quarrels, and said to the proudest of kings, *Touch not mine anointed*, *Psal. cv. 14, 15. Exod. xvii. 14*. He had in a special manner a controversy with those that attempted to debauch them, and draw them off from being holiness to the Lord; witness his quarrel with the Midianites, about the matter of Peor, *Numb. xv. 17, 18*.

3. He brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and great terror, *Deut. iv. 34*. and yet with a kind hand and great tenderness led them through a vast howling wilderness, *ver. 6. a land of deserts and pits; or of graves, terram sepulchralen*, where there was ground, not to seed them, but to bury them; where there was no good to be expected, for it was a land of drought, but all manner of evil to be feared, for it was the shadow of death; in that darksome valley they walked 40 years, but God was with them, his rod in Moses's hand and his staff comforted them, and even their God prepared a table for them, *Psal. xxiii. 4, 5*. gave them bread out of the clouds, and drink out of the rocks. It was a land abandoned by all mankind, as yielding neither road nor rest; it was no thoroughfare, for no man passed through it; no settlement, for no man dwelt there; for God will teach his people to tread untrodden paths, to dwell alone, and to be singular. The difficulties of the journey are thus insisted on to magnify the power and goodness of God, in bringing them through all safe to their journey's end at last. All God's spiritual Israel must own their obligations to him for a safe conduct, through the wilderness of this world, no less dangerous to the soul, than that was to the body.

4. At length he settled them in Canaan, *ver. 7. I brought you into a plentiful country*; which would be the more acceptable after they had been for so many years in a land of drought. They did eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof, and were allowed so to do. I brought you into a land of Carmel; so the word is; Carmel was a place of extraordinary fruitfulness; Canaan was as one great fruitful field, *Deut. viii. 7*.

5. God gave them the means of knowledge and grace, and communion with him. That is implied, *ver. 8*. they had priests that handled the law, read it, and expounded it to them, that was part of their business, *Deut. xxxiii. 8*. They had pastors to guide them, and take care of their affairs, magistrates and judges; they had prophets to consult God for them, and to make known his mind to them.

1. He upbraids them with their horrid ingratitude, and the ill returns they had made him for these favours; let them all come and answer to this charge, *ver. 4*. it is exhibited in the name of God against all the families of the house of Israel, for they can none of them plead not guilty.

2. He challenges them to produce any instance of his being unjust and unkind to them. Though he had conferred favours upon them in some things, yet, if in other things he had dealt hardly with them, they had not been altogether without excuse: He therefore puts it fairly to them to shew

cause for their deserting him, *ver. 5. What iniquity have your fathers found in me, or you either? Have you, upon trial, found God a hard master? Have his commands put any hardship upon you, or obliged you to any thing unfit, unfair, or unbecoming you? Have his promises put any cheats upon you, or raised your expectations of things, which you were afterwards disappointed of? You that renounce your covenant with God, can you say it was a hard bargain, and that which you could not live upon? You that forsake the ordinances of God, can you say it was because they were a wearisome service? or work that there was nothing to be got by? No, what disappointments you have met with, it was long of yourselves, not long of God. The yoke of his commandments is easy, and in keeping of them there is great reward. Note, Those that forsake God, cannot say, that he has ever given them any provocation to do so: And for this, we may safely appeal to the conscience of sinners; the slothful servant that offered such a plea as this, had it over-ruled out of his own mouth, *Luke xix. 22*. Though he afflicts us, we cannot say there is iniquity in him; he doth us no wrong; the ways of the Lord is undoubtedly equal, all the iniquity is in our ways.*

2. He chargeth them with being very unjust and unkind to him notwithstanding.

1. They had quitted his service; *They are gone from me*, nay, they are gone far from me; they studied how to estrange themselves from God and their duty, and got as far as they could out of the reach of his commandments, and their own convictions. Those that have deserted religion, commonly set themselves at a greater distance from it, and in a greater opposition to it, than those that never knew it.

2. They had quitted it for the service of idols; which was so much the greater reproach to God and his service; they went from him, not to mend themselves, but to cheat themselves; *They have walked after vanity*, i. e. idolatry; for an idol is a vain vain thing, it is nothing in the world, *1 Cor. viii. 4. Dent. xxxii. 21. Jer. xiv. 22*. Idolatrous worship, are vanities, *Acts xiv. 15*. Idolaters are vain, for they that make idols are like unto them, *Psal. cxv. 8*. as much stocks or stones as the images they worship, and good for as little.

3. They had with idolatry introduced all manner of wickedness. When they entered into the good land which God gave them, they defiled it, (*ver. 7*.) by defiling themselves, and disuniting themselves for the service of God. It was God's land, they were but tenants to him, sojourners in it, *Lev. xxv. 23*. It was his heritage, for it was an holy land, Immanuel's land, but they made it an abomination, even to God himself, who was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel.

4. Having forsaken God, though they soon found they had changed for the worse, yet they had no thoughts of returning to him again, nor took any steps towards it. Neither the people nor the priests made any inquiry after him, took no thoughts about their duty to him, nor expressed any desire to recover his favour. (1.) The people said not, *Where is the Lord?* *ver. 6*. Though they were trained up in an observance of him as their God, and had been often told, that he brought them out of the land of Egypt, to be a people peculiar to himself, yet they never asked after him, nor desired the knowledge of his ways. (2.) The priests said not, *Where is the Lord?* *ver. 8*. They whose office it was to attend immediately upon him, were in no concern to acquaint themselves with him, or approve themselves to him. They who should have instructed the people in the knowledge of God, took no care to get the knowledge of him themselves; the scribes that handled the law, did not know God nor his will, either could not expound the scriptures at all, or not aright. The pastors, that should have kept the flock from transgressing, were themselves ringleaders in transgression; they have transgressed against me. The pretenders to prophecy prophesied by Baal, in his name, to his honour, being backed and supported by the wicked kings, to confront the Lord's prophets. Baal's prophets joined with Baal's priests, and walked after the things that do not profit, i. e. after the idols which can be no way helpful to their worshippers. See how the best characters are usurped, and the best offices liable to corruptions; and wonder not at the sin and ruin of a people when the blind are leaders of the blind.

9. ¶ Wherefore I will yet plead with you, faith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead.

10. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. 11. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. 12. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, faith the LORD, 13. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

The prophet having shewed their base ingratitude in forsaking God, here shews their unparalleled fickleness and folly, *ver. 9. I will yet plead with you*. Note, Before God punisheth sinners, he pleads with them, to bring them to repentance. And when much hath been said of the evil of sin, yet still there is more to be said; when one article of the charge is made good, there is another to be urged; when we have said a great deal, still we have yet to speak on God's behalf, *Job xxxvi. 2*. And those that deal with sinners for their conviction, must urge a variety of arguments, and follow their blow. God had before pleaded with their fathers, and asked, why they walked after vanity, and became vain? *ver. 5*. Now he pleads with them, who persisted in that vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers, and with their children's children, i. e. with all that in every age tread in their steps. Let those that forsake God know, that he is willing to argue the case fairly with them, that he may be justified when he speaks. He pleads that with us, which we should plead with ourselves.

1. He shews, that they acted contrary to the usage of all nations; their neighbours were more firm and faithful to the false gods than they were to the true God. They were ambitious of being like the nations, and yet in this they were unlike them: He challengeth them to produce an instance of any nations that had changed their gods, *ver. 10, 11*. or were apt to change them. Let them survey either the old records, or the present state of the isles of Chittim, Greece, and the European islands, the countries that were more polite and learned; and of Kedar, that lay south-east (as the other north-west from them) which were more rude and barbarous; and they should not find an instance of a nation that had changed their gods though they had never done them any kindness, nor could do, for they were no gods. Such a veneration had they for their gods, and so good an opinion of them, and such a respect for the choice their fathers had made, that though they were gods of wood and stone, they would not change them for gods of silver and gold, no not for the living and true God. Shall we praise them for this? we praise them not. But it may well be urged to the reproach of Israel,

Israel, that they who were the only people that had no cause to change their God, were yet the only people that had changed him. Note, Men are hardly brought off that religion which they have been brought up in, though never so absurd and grossly false. The zeal and constancy of idolaters should shame Christians out of their coldness and inconstancy.

2. He shews, they have acted contrary to the dictates of common sense in that they not only changed (it may sometimes be our duty and wisdom to do so) but they changed *for the worse*; and made an ill bargain for themselves. (1.) They parted from a God that was their glory; that made them truly glorious, and every way put honour upon them; one whom they might with a humble confidence glory in as their's, who is himself a glorious God, and the glory of those whose God he is; he was particularly the glory of his people Israel, for his glory had often appeared on their tabernacle. (2.) They closed with gods that could do them no good; gods that do not profit their worshippers. Idolaters change God's glory into shame, Rom. i. 23. and so they do their own; in dishonouring him, they disgrace and disparage themselves, and are enemies to their own interest. Note, Whatever they turn to that forsake God, it will never do them any good; it will flatter them, and please them, but it cannot profit them.

Heaven itself is here called upon to stand amazed at the sin and folly of these apostates from God, ver. 12, 13. *Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this.* The earth is so universally corrupt, that it will take no notice of it; but let the heavens and heavenly bodies be astonished at it. Let the sun blush to see such ingratitude, and be afraid to shine upon such ungrateful wretches. They that forsook God, worshipped the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; but these, instead of being pleased with the adorations that were paid to them, were astonished and horribly afraid; and would rather have been very desolate, utterly exhausted, as the world is, and deprived of their light than that it should have given occasion to any to worship them. Some refer it to the angels of heaven; if they rejoice at the return of souls to God, we may suppose they are astonished and horribly afraid at the revolt of souls from him. The meaning is, that the carriage of this people towards God was such as, (1.) We may well admire and wonder at, that ever men that pretend to reason should do any thing so very absurd. (2.) Such as we ought to have a holy indignation at, as impious and a high affront to our Maker, whose honour every good man is jealous for. (3.) Such as we may tremble to think of the consequences of; what will be the end thereof. Be horribly afraid to think of that wrath and curse, which will be the portion of those that thus throw themselves out of God's grace and favour. Now what is it that is to be thought of with all this horror? It is this; my people, whom I have taught, and should have ruled, have committed two great evils, ingratitude and folly; they have acted contrary both to their duty and to their interest. (1.) They have affronted their God, by turning their back upon him, as if he were not worthy their notice; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, in whom they have an abundant and constant supply of all that comfort and relief they stand in need of, and they have it freely. God is their fountain of life, Psal. xxxvi. 9. There is in him an all-sufficiency of grace and strength, all our springs are in him, and our streams from him; to forsake him is in effect to deny this; he has been to us a bountiful benefactor, a fountain of living waters, overflowing, ever-flowing in the gifts of his favour; to forsake him is to refuse to acknowledge his kindness, and to withhold that tribute of love and praise, which his kindness calls for. (2.) They have cheated themselves; they forsook their own mercies, but it was for lying vanities; they took a great deal of pains to hew them out cisterns; to dig pits or pools in the earth or rock, which they would carry water to, or which should receive the rain; but they proved broken cisterns, false at the bottom, so that they could hold no water: When they came to quench their thirst there, they found nothing but mud and mire, and the filthy sediments of a standing lake. Such idols were they to their worshippers, and such a change did they experience who turned from God to them. If we make an idol of any creature, wealth, or pleasure, or honour, if we place our happiness in it, and promise ourselves that comfort and satisfaction in it, which is to be had in God only, if we make it our joy and love, our hope and confidence, we shall find it a cistern, which we take a great deal of pains to hew out and fill, and at the best it will hold but a little water, and that dead and flat, and soon corrupting, and become nauseous. Nay, it is a broken cistern, that cracks and cleaves in hot weather, so that the water is gone when we have most need of it, Job vi. 15. Let us therefore with purpose of heart cleave to the Lord only, for whither else shall we go? He hath the words of eternal life.

14. ¶ Is Israel a servant? is he a home-born slave? why is he spoiled? 15. The young lions roared upon him and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant. 16. Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head. 17. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way? 18. And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? 19. Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the LORD God of hosts.

The prophet farther to evidence the folly of their forsaking God, shews them what mischief they had already brought upon themselves by it; it had already cost them dear, for to this was owing all the calamities their country was now groaning under; which were but an earnest of more and greater, if they repented not. See how they smarted for their folly.

1. Their neighbours, that were their professed enemies, prevailed against them, and that was long of their sin.

(1.) They were enslaved, and lost their liberty, ver. 14. *Is Israel a servant? No, Israel is my son, my first-born*, Exod. iv. 22. they are children, they are heirs; nay, their extraction is noble, they are the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen. *Is he a home-born slave? No, he is not the son of the bond-woman*, but of the free; they were designed for dominion, not for servitude. Every thing in their constitution carried on it the marks of freedom and honour; why then is he spoiled of his liberty? Why is he used as a servant, as a home-born slave? Why doth he make himself a slave to his lusts, to his idols, to that which doth not profit? ver. 11. What a thing is this, that such a birth-right should be sold for a mess of pottage? Such a crown profaned, and laid in the dust? Why is he made a slave to the oppressor? God provided that a Hebrew servant should be free the seventh year, and that their slaves should be of the heathen, not

of their brethren, Lev. xxv. 44—46. But notwithstanding this, the princes made slaves of their subjects, and masters of their subjects, Jer. xxxiv. 11. and so made their country mean and miserable, which God had made happy and honourable. The neighbouring princes and powers broke in upon them, and made some of them slaves even in their own country; and perhaps sold others for slaves into foreign countries. And how came they thus to lose their liberties? Why, for their iniquities they sold themselves, Isa. l. 1. We may apply this spiritually; is the soul of man a servant? It is a home-born slave? No, it is not. Why then is it spoiled? it is because it has sold its own liberty, and enslaved itself to divers lusts, and passions, which is a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation.

(2.) They were impoverished, and had lost their wealth; God brought them into a plentiful country, ver. 7. but all their neighbours made a prey of it, ver. 15. *young lions roar aloud over him, and yell*; they are a continual terror to him; sometimes one potent enemy, and sometimes another, and sometimes many in confederacy, fall upon him and triumph over him. They carry off the fruits of this land, and make that waste, burn his cities, when first they have plundered them, so that they remain without inhabitant; either because there are no houses to dwell in, or because those that should dwell in them are carried into captivity.

(3.) They were abused and insulted over and beaten by every body, ver. 16. *even the children of Noph and Tahapanes*, despicable people, not famed for military courage or strength, have broken the crown of thy head, or fed upon it. In all their struggles with thee they have been too hard for thee; and thou hast always come off with a broken head. The principal part of thy country, that which lay next Jerusalem, has been and is a prey to them. How calamitous the condition of Judah had been of late in the reign of Manasseh, we find, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11. and perhaps it had not now much recovered itself.

(4.) All this was owing to their sin, ver. 17. *Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?* By their sinful confederacies with the nations, and especially their conformity to them in their idolatrous customs and usages; they had made themselves very mean and contemptible, as all those do that have made a profession of religion and afterwards thrown it off. Nothing now appeared of that, which, by their constitution, made them both honourable and formidable, and therefore nobody either respected them or feared them. But this was not all; they had provoked God to give them up into the hands of their enemies, and to make them a scourge to them, and give them success against them; and thus thou hast procured it to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, revolted from thine allegiance to him, and so thrown thyself out of his protection; for protection and allegiance go together: Whatever trouble we are in at any time, we may thank ourselves for it; for we bring it upon our own head by our forsaking God; Thou hast forsaken thy God, at the time that he was leading thee, by the way; so it should be read. Then when he was leading thee on to a happy peace and settlement, and thou wast within a step of it, then thou forsookest him, and so didst put a bar in thine own door.

2. Their neighbours that were their pretended friends, deceived them, distressed them, and helped them not; and this also was owing to their sin.

1. They did in vain seek to Egypt and Assyria for help, ver. 18. *What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt?* When thou art under apprehensions of danger thou art running to Egypt for help, Isa. xxxi. 1. and xxxi. 1. Thou art for drinking the waters of Sihor, i. e. Nilus. Thou reliest upon their multitude, and refreshest thyself with the fair promises they make thee; at other times thou art in the way of Assyria, sending or going with all speed to fetch recruits from thence, and thinkest to satisfy thyself with the waters of the river Euphrates; but what hast thou to do there? What wilt thou get by applying thyself to them? they shall help in vain, shall be broken reeds to thee, and what thou thoughtest would be to thee as a river, will be but a broken cistern.

2. This also was because of their sin; the judgments shall unavoidably come upon them which their sin has deserved, and then to what purpose is it to call in for help against it? ver. 19. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee*, and then it is impossible for them to save thee, know and see therefore upon the whole matter, that it is an evil thing, that thou hast forsaken God, for that it is that makes thine enemies enemies indeed, and thy friends friends in vain. Observe here, (1.) The nature of sin. It is forsaking the Lord as our God, it is the soul's alienation from him and aversion to him. Cleaving to sin is leaving God. (2.) The cause of sin. It is because his fear is not in us. It is for want of a good principle in us, particularly for want of the fear of God, that is at the bottom of our apostacy from him; therefore men forsake their duty to God, because they stand in no awe of him, nor have any dread of his displeasure. (3.) The malignity of sin. It is an evil thing and bitter. Sin is an evil thing, an only evil; an evil that has no good in it, an evil that is the root and cause of all other evil; it is evil indeed, for it is not only the greatest contrariety to the divine nature, but the great corruption of the human nature. It is bitter; a state of sin is the gall of bitterness, and every sinful way will be bitterness in the latter end; the wages of it is death, and death is bitter. (4.) The fatal consequences of sin: as it is in itself evil and bitter, so it has a direct tendency to make us miserable. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee*; not only destroy and ruin thee hereafter, but correct and reprove thee now, i. e. it will certainly bring trouble upon thee; the punishment will so inevitably follow the sin, that the sin shall itself be said to punish thee: Nay, the punishment in the kind and circumstances of it shall so directly answer the sin, that thou mayest read the sin in the punishment; and the justice of the punishment shall be so plain, that thou shalt not have a word to say for thyself, thine own wickedness shall convince thee and stop thy mouth for ever, and thou shalt be forced to own that the Lord is righteous. (5.) The use and application of all this; know therefore and see it, and repent of thy sin, that so the iniquity that is thy correction may not be thy ruin.

20. ¶ For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot. 21. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? 22. For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD. 23. How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done; thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways; 24. A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure: in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not

not weary themselves; in her month they shall sin d her. 25. Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. 26. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets. 27. Saying to a stock, Thou art my father: and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face; but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us, 28. But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

In these verses the prophet goes on with his charge against this back-sliding people; observe here,

1. The sin itself that he charges them with, and that is idolatry, that great provocation which they were so notoriously guilty of. (1.) They frequented the places of idol worship, ver. 20. upon every high hill, and under every green tree, in the high places and the groves, such as the heathen had foolish fondness and veneration for; thou wanderest first to one and then to another, like one unsettled, and still uneasy and unsatisfied; but in all, playing the harlot, worshipping false gods, which is spiritual whoredom and was commonly accompanied with corporal whoredom too. Note, They that leave God wander endlessly, and a vagrant lust is insatiable. (2.) They made images for themselves, and gave divine honour to them, ver. 26, 27. not only the common people, but even the kings and princes, that should have restrained the people from doing ill, and the priests and prophets, that should have taught them to do well, were themselves so wretchedly foolish and stupid, and under the power of such a strong delusion, as to say to a stock, Thou art my father, i. e. Thou art my god, the author of my being, to whom I owe duty, and on whom I have a dependence; saying to a stone, to an idol made of stone, Thou hast begotten me, or brought me forth, therefore protect me, provide for me, and bring me up. What greater affront could men put upon God who is our Father that has made us? It was a downright disowning of their obligations to him. What greater affront could men put upon themselves and their own reason, to acknowledge that which is in itself absurd and impossible, and by making stocks and stones their parents, to make themselves no better than stocks and stones? When these were first made the objects of worship, they were supposed to be animated by some celestial power or spirit; but by degrees the thought of this was lost, and so vain did idolaters become in their imagination, even the princes and priests themselves, that the very idol, though made of wood and stone, was supposed to be their father, and adored accordingly. (3.) They multiplied these dunghill deities endlessly, ver. 28. according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah. When they had forsaken that God who is one and all-sufficient for all, (1.) They were not satisfied with any gods they had, but still desired more: that idolatry being in this respect of the same nature with covetousness, which is spiritual idolatry, that the more men have, the more they would have; which is a plain evidence, that what men make an idol of they find to be insufficient and unsatisfying and that it cannot make the owners thereunto perfect. (2.) They could not agree in the same god, having left the center of unity they fell into endless discord; one city fancied one deity, and another another, and each was fond to have one of its own, to be near them, and to take special care of them. Thus did they in vain seek that in many gods, which is to be found in one God only.

2. The proof of this upon them; no witnesses need be called, it is proved by the notorious evidence of the fact.

(1.) They went about to deny it, and were ready to plead not guilty. They pretended they would acquit themselves from this guilt, washed themselves with nitre, and took much sipe, offered many things in excuse and extenuation of it, ver. 22. They pretended they did not worship these as gods, but as demons and mediators between the immortal God and mortal men; or that it was not divine honour that they gave them, but civil respect; that they sought to evade the convictions of God's word, and to screen themselves from the dread of his wrath. Nay, some of them had the impudence to deny the thing itself, they said, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim, ver. 23. Because it was done secretly, and industriously concealed Ezek. viii. 12. they thought it could never be proved upon them, and they had front enough to deny it. In this, as in other things, their way was like that of the adulterous woman, that saith I have done no wickedness, Prov. xxx. 20.

(2.) Notwithstanding all their evasions they are convicted of it, and found guilty. How canst thou deny the fact, and say, I have not gone after Baalim? How canst thou deny the fault, and say, I am not polluted? The prophet speaks with wonder at their impudence: how canst thou put on a face to say so, when it is certain? (1.) God's omniscience is a witness against thee. Thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God; it is laid up and hidden to be produced against thee in the day of judgment; sealed up among his treasures, Deut. xxxii. 33. Job xxi. 9. Hos. xiii. 12. It is imprinted deep, and stained before me, so some read it. Though thou endeavour to wash it out, as murderers, to get the stain of the blood of the person slain out of their clothes, yet it will never be got out; God's eye is upon it, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. (2.) Thine own conscience is a witness against thee. See thy way in the valley; they had worshipped idols not only on the high hills but in the valleys, Isa. lvii. 5, 6. in the valley over against Beth-peor, so some, where they worshipped Baal-peor; Deut. xxiv. 6. Numb. xxv. 3. as if the prophet looked as far back as the iniquity of Peor; but if it mean any particular valley, surely it is the valley of the son of Hinnom, for that was the place where they sacrificed their children to Moloch, and which therefore witnessed against them more than any other; look into that valley, and thou canst not but know what thou hast done.

3. The aggravations of this sin with which they are charged, which speak it exceeding sinful.

2. God had done great things for them, and yet they revolted from him, and rebelled against him, ver. 20. Of old time I have broken the yoke and burst thy bands; this refers to the bringing of them out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, which they should not remember, chap. ii. 6. but God did; for when he told them they should have no other gods before him he prefixed this as a reason, I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of the land of Egypt: and these bonds of their's which God had loosed, should have bound them for ever to him: but they had ungratefully broken the bands of duty to that God who had broken the bonds of their slavery.

2. They had promised fair, but had not made good their promise; Thou saidst, I will not transgress; then when the mercy of thy deliverance was fresh, thou wast so sensible of it, that thou wast willing to lay themselves under the most sacred ties to continue faithful to thy God, and never to forsake him. Then they said, nay, but we will serve the Lord, Josh. xxiv. 21. How often have we said we would not transgress, we would not offend any more and yet we have started aside like a deceitful bow, and repeated and multiplied our transgressions?

They had wretchedly degenerated from what they were when God first formed them into a people, ver. 21. I had planted thee a noble vine. The constitution of their government both in church and state was excellent, their laws righteous, and all the ordinances instructive, and very significant; and a generation of good men there was among them when they first settled in Canaan, Israel served the Lord, and kept close to him all the days of Joshua, and the elders that out-lived Joshua, Josh. xxiv. 31. they were then wholly a right seed, likely to replenish the vineyard, they were planted in with choice vines: but it proved otherwise, the very next generation knew not the Lord, nor the works which he had done, Judges ii. 10. and so they were worse and worse, till they became the degenerate plants of a strange vine, they were now the reverse of what they were at first; their constitution was quite broken, and there was nothing in them of that good which one might have expected from a people so happily formed, nothing of the purity and piety of their ancestors. Their vine is as the vine of Sodom, Deut. xxxii. 32. This may fitly be applied to the nature of man, it was planted by its great author a noble vine, a right seed; God made men upright; but it is so universally corrupt that it is become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, that bears gull and wormwood; and it is so to God, it is highly distasteful and offensive to him.

4. They were violent and eager in the pursuit of their idolatries, devoted on their idols, and were fond of new ones, and they would not be restrained from them neither by the word of God, nor by his providences; so strong was the impetus with which they were carried out after this sin. They are here compared to a swift dromedary traversing his ways, a female of that species of creatures hunting about for a male, ver. 23. and to the same purpose, a wild ass used to the wilderness, ver. 24. not tamed by labour, and therefore very wanton, snuffing up the wind at her pleasure when she comes near the heels, and on such an occasion who can turn her away? who can hinder her from that which she lusteth after? They that seek her then will not weary themselves for her, for they know it is to no purpose; but will have a little patience till she is big with young, till that month comes which is the last of the months that she fulfills, Job xxxix. 2. when she is heavy and unwieldy, and then they shall find her, and she cannot out-run them. Note, (1.) Eager lust is a brutish thing, and those that will not be turned away from the gratifying and indulging of it, by reason, and conscience, and honour, are to be reckoned as brute beasts and no better; such as were born, and still are like the wild ass's colt; let them not be looked upon as rational creatures. (2.) Idolatry is strangely intoxicating, and those that are addicted to it will very hardly be cured of it. That lust is as headstrong as any other. (3.) There are some so violently set upon the prosecution of their lusts, that it is to no purpose to attempt to give check to them; they that do it weary themselves in vain: Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. (4.) The time will come when the most fierce will be tamed, and the most wanton will be manageable; when distress and anguish comes upon them, then their ears will be open to discipline, that is the month in which you may find them, Psal. cxli. 5, 6.

5. They were obstinate in their sin, and as they could not be restrained, so they would not be reformed, ver. 25. Here is, (1.) Fair warning given them of the ruin that this wicked course of life would certainly bring them to at last, with a caution therefore not to persist in it, but to break off from it: it would certainly bring them into a miserable captivity, when their feet should be unshod, and they should be forced to travel barefoot, and when they would be denied fair water by their oppressors, so that their throat should be dried with thirst; this will be in the end thereof. They that affect strange gods and strange ways of worship, will justly be made prisoners to a strange king in a strange land. Take up in time therefore, thy running after thy idols will run the shoes off thy feet; and thy panting after them will bring thy throat to thirst, and therefore withhold thy foot from these violent pursuits, and thy throat from these violent desires. One would think it should effectually check us in the career, to consider what it will bring us to at last. (2.) Their rejecting this fair warning; they said to those that would have persuaded them to repent and reform, There is no hope, no, never expect to work upon us, or prevail with us to cast away our idols, for we have loved strangers, and after them we will go; we are resolved we will, and therefore trouble not yourselves or us any more with your admonitions, it is to no purpose. There is no hope that we should ever break this corrupt habit and disposition we have got, and therefore we had as good yield to it as go about to get the mastery of it. Note, their case is very miserable who have brought themselves to such a pass, that their corruptious triumph over their convictions; they know they should reform but own they cannot, and therefore resolve they will not. But as we must not despair of the mercy of God, but believe that sufficient for the pardon of our sins, though never so heinous, if we repent and sue for that mercy; so neither must we despair of the grace of God, but believe that able to subdue our corruptions though never so strong, if we pray for and improve that grace. A man must never say there is no hope, as long as he is on this side hell.

6. They had shamed themselves by their sin, in putting confidence in that which would certainly deceive them in the day of their distress, and putting him away that would have helped them, ver. 26, 27, 28. As the thief is ashamed when, notwithstanding all his arts and tricks to conceal his theft, he is found and brought to punishment: So is the house of Israel ashamed, not with a penitent shame for the sin they had been guilty of, but with a penal shame for the disappointment they met with in that sin. They will be ashamed when they find,

1. That were forced to cry to the God whom they had put contempt upon. In their prosperity they had turned the back to God and not the face; they had slighted him, took on them they had forgotten him, or did what they could to forget him, would not look towards him, but looked another way, they went from him as fast and as far as they could; but in the time of their trouble they will find no satisfaction, but in applying themselves to him, then they will say, Arise and save us. Their fathers had many a time taken this shame to themselves, Judg. iii. 9.—iv. 3.—x. 10. yet they would not be persuaded to cleave to God that they might have come to him in their trouble with the more confidence.

2. That they have no relief from the gods they have made their court to. They will be ashamed when they perceive that the gods they have made cannot serve them, and the God that made them will not serve them. To bring them to this shame, if so be they might hereby be brought to repentance, they are here sent to the gods whom they served, as Judg. x. 14. They cried to God, Arise, and save us; God saith of the idols, Let them arise and save thee, for thou hast no reason to expect that I should. Let them arise if they can

can from the places where they are fixed; let them try whether they can save thee; but thou wilt be ashamed when thou findest that they can do thee no good, for though thou hadst a god for every city, yet *thy cities are burnt without inhabitant*, ver. 15. Thus it is the folly of sinners to please themselves with that which will certainly be their grief, and pride themselves in that which will certainly be their shame.

29. Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD. 30. In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion. 31. ¶ O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee? 32. Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number. 33. Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways. 34. Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these. 35. Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee because thou sayest, I have not sinned. 36. Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria. 37. Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

The prophet here goes on in the same strain, aiming to bring a sinful people to repentance, that their destruction might be prevented.

1. He avers the truth of the charge; it was evident beyond contradiction, it was the greatest absurdity imaginable in them to think of denying it, ver. 29. *Wherefore will ye plead with me*, and put me on the proof of it? or wherefore will ye go about to plead any thing in excuse of the crime, or to obtain a mitigation of the sentence? your plea will certainly be overruled, and judgment given against you: you know you have all transgressed, one as well as another, why then do you quarrel with me for contending with you?

2. He aggravates it from the consideration both of their incorrigibleness and of their ingratitude.

(1.) They had not been wrought upon by the judgment of God which they had been under, ver. 30. *In vain have I smitten your children*, i. e. the children or people of Judah. They had been under divine rebukes of many kinds, God therein designed to bring them to repentance, but it was in vain, they did not answer God's end in afflicting them; their consciences were not awakened, nor their hearts softened and humbled, nor were they driven to seek unto God; they received no instruction by the correction, were not made the better by it; and it is a great loss thus to lose an affliction; they did not receive, i. e. they did not submit to or comply with the correction, but their hearts fretted against the Lord, and so they were smitten in vain: Even the children, the young people among them (so it may be taken) were smitten in vain; they were so soon prejudiced against repentance, that they were as untractable as the old ones that had been long accustomed to do evil.

(2.) They had not been wrought upon by the word of God, which he had sent them in the mouth of his servants the prophets, nay, they had killed the messengers for the sake of the message; *Your own sword hath devoured your prophets like a destroying lion*; you have put them to death for their faithfulness, with as much rage and fury, and with as much greediness and pleasure as a lion devours his prey. Their prophets, who were their greatest blessings, were treated by them as if they had been the plagues of their generation, and this was their measure-filling sin, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. they killed their own prophets, 1 Thess. ii. 15.

3. They had not been wrought upon by the favours God had bestowed upon them, ver. 31. *O generation*, he doth not call them as he might, *O faithless and perverse generation, O generation of vipers*; but speaks them fair, *O ye men of this generation, see ye the word of the Lord*, do not only hear it but consider it diligently, apply your mind, closely to it: as we are bid to hear the rod, Micah. vi. 9. for that has its voice, so we are bid to see the word, for that has its visions, its views. It intimates, that what is here said is plain and undeniable, you may see it very evident; it is written as with a sun-beam, so that he who runs may read it. *Have I been a wilderness to Israel? a land of darkness?* Note, Those that have had any dealings with God never had reason to complain of him as a wilderness or a land of darkness? He has blessed us with the fruits of the earth, and therefore we cannot say that he hath been a wilderness to us, a dry and barren land, that (as Mr. Gataker expresseth it) he hath held us to hard meat, as cattle fed upon the common; no, his sheep have been led into green pastures. He has also blessed us with the lights of heaven, and has not withheld them, so that we cannot say, he hath been to us a land of darkness: he hath caused his sun to shine, as well as his rain to fall, upon the evil and unthankful. Or the meaning is in general, that the service of God had not been to any either an unpleasant or an unprofitable service. God sometimes hath led his people through a wilderness and a land of darkness, but he himself was then to them all that which they needed, he so fed them with manna, and led them by a pillar of fire, that it was to them a fruitful field and a land of light. The world is to those who make it their home and their portion, a wilderness and a land of darkness, vanity and vexation of spirit, but those that dwell in God have the lines fallen to them in pleasant places.

(4.) Instead of being wrought upon by these, they were grown intolerably insolent and imperious. They say, *We are lords, we will come no more unto thee*; now they were become a potent kingdom, or thought themselves such, they set up for themselves, and shook off their dependance upon God. This is the language of presumptuous sinners, and it is not only very impious and profane, but very unreasonable and foolish. (1.) It is absurd for us that are subjects to say, *we are lords*, that is rulers, and we will come no more to God to receive commands from him, for as he is king of old, so he is king for ever, and we can never pretend to be from under his authority. (2.) It is absurd for us that are beggars to say *we are lords*, that is, we are rich, and we will come no more to God, to receive favours from him, as if we could live without him, and need not be beholden to him. God justly

takes it ill of those to whom he has been a bountiful benefactor, and yet they care not either for hearing from him or speaking to him.

3. He lays the blame of all their wickedness upon their forgetting God, ver. 32. *They have forgotten me*, they have industriously banished the thoughts of God out of their minds, jostled those thoughts out with thoughts of their idols, and avoided all those things that would put them in mind of God. (1.) Though they were his own people, in covenant with him, and professing relation to him, and had the tokens of his presence in the midst of them, as his favour to him, yet they forgot him. (2.) They had long neglected him, *days without number*, time out of mind, as we say. They had not for a great while entertained any serious thoughts of him; so that they seemed quite to have forgotten him, and resolved never to remember him again. How many days of our lives have passed without suitable remembrance of God? who can number those empty days? (3.) They had not had such a regard and affection to him, as young ladies generally have to their fine cloaths; *Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?* No, their hearts are upon them, they value them so much, and themselves by them, that they are ever and anon thinking and speaking of them; when they are to appear in public they do not forget any of their ornaments, but put every one in its place, as they are described, *Lys. iii. 18.* and yet my people have forgotten me. It is sad that any should be more in love with their fine clothes than with their God; and should rather leave their religion behind them, or part with that, than leave any of their ornaments behind them, or part with them. Is not God our ornament? Is he not a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty to his people? Did we look upon him to be so, and upon our religion as an ornament of grace to our heads, and chains about our neck (Prov. i. 9.) we should be as mindful of them as ever any maid was of her ornaments, or a bride of her attire; should be as careful to preserve them, and as fond to appear in them.

4. He shews them what an ill influence their sins had had upon others; the sins of God's professing people hardened and encouraged those about them in their evil ways, especially when they appeared forward and ring-leaders in sin, ver. 33. *Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?* alluding to the practice of lewd women that strive to recommend themselves by their ogling looks and gayish dress, as Jezebel that painted her face and tired her head: Thus had they courted their neighbours into sinful confederacies with them, and communion in their idolatries, and had taught the wicked ones their ways, their ways of mixing God's institutions with their idolatrous customs and usages, which was a great profanation of that which was sacred, and made the ways of their idolatry worse than that of others. Those have a great deal to answer for, that by their fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness made wicked ones more wicked than otherwise they would be.

5. He charged them with the guilt of murder added to the guilt of their idolatry, ver. 34. *Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls*, i. e. the life blood of the poor innocents, which cried to heaven, and for which God was now making inquisition. Either the children that were offered in sacrifice to Moloch; or it may be taken more generally for all the innocent blood which Manasseh shed, and with which he had filled Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxi. 16. the righteous blood, especially the blood of the prophets, and others that witnessed against their impieties. This blood was found not by secret search, not by digging, so the word is, but upon all these, it was above ground. This intimates, that the guilt of this kind they had contracted was certain and evident, not doubtful, or which would bear a dispute; and that it was avowed and barefaced, and which they had not so much sense either of shame or fear as to endeavour to conceal; which was a great aggravation of it.

6. He over-rules their plea of not guilty. Though this matter be so plain, yet thou sayest, *Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me*; and again, *Thou sayest, I have not sinned*, ver. 35. therefore I will plead with thee, and will convince thee of thy mistake. Because they deny the charge, and stand upon their own justification, therefore God will join issue with them, and plead with them, both by his word and by his rod. Those shall be made to know how much they deceive themselves, (1.) That say they have not offended God, they are innocent, though they have been guilty of the grossest enormities. (2.) That expect God will be reconciled to them, though they do not repent and reform. They own they had been under the tokens of God's anger, but they think it was causeless, and that they by pleading innocence had proved it to be so, and therefore conclude God will immediately let fall his action, and his anger shall be turned from them. This is very provoking, and God will plead with them, and convince them, that his anger is just, for they have sinned, and he will never cease his controversy till they, instead of justifying themselves thus, humble, and judge, and condemn themselves.

7. He upbraids them with the shameful disappointments, they met with in making creatures their confidence, while they made God their enemy, ver. 36, 37. It was a piece of spiritual idolatry they were often guilty of, that they trusted in an arm of flesh, and their hearts therein departed from the Lord. Now here he shews them the folly of it. (1.) They were restless and unsatisfied in the choice of their confidences; *Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy ways?* Doubtless it is because thou meetest not with that in those thou didst confide in, which thou promisedst thyself. Those that make God their hope, and walk in a continual dependance upon him, need not gad about to change their way; for their souls may return to him, and repose in him as their rest: But they that trust in creatures will be perpetually uneasy, like Noah's dove, that found no rest for the sole of her foot: Every thing they trust to fails them, and then they think to change for the better, but will be still disappointed. They first trust to Assyria, and when that proved a broken reed, they depended upon Egypt, and that proved no better. Creatures being vanity, they will be vexation of spirit to all those that put their confidence in them; they gad about, seeing rest, and finding none. (2.) They were quite disappointed in the confidence they made choice of; so the prophets tell them they should be: *Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt, which thou now trustest in*, as formerly thou wast of Assyria, who distressed them, and helped them not, 2 Chron. xxviii. 20. The Jews were a peculiar people in their profession of religion, and for that reason none of the neighbour nations cared for them, nor could heartily love them; and yet they were still courting them and confiding in them, and were well enough served when they deceived them. See what will come of it, ver. 37. *Thou shalt go forth from him*, thine ambassadors or envoys shall return from Egypt disappointed, *re infected*, and therefore with their hands upon their heads, condoling the desperate condition of their people. Or, *Thou shalt go forth from hence*, viz. into captivity in a strange land; with thine hands upon thine head, holding it because it akes (*ubi dolor, ibi digitus*) or a people ashamed; for Tamar, in the height of her confusion, laid her hand on her head, 2 Sam. xiii. 19. And Egypt, that thou relieest on, shall not be able to prevent it, or to rescue thee out of captivity. They that will not lay their hand on their heart in godly sorrow, which worketh life, shall be made to lay their hand on their head in the sorrow of the world, which worketh death. And no wonder that Egypt cannot help them, when God will not. If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I? The Egyptians are broken reeds, for the Lord

Lord has rejected thy confidences; he will not make use of them for thy relief, will neither so far honour them, nor so far give countenance to thy confidence in them, as to appoint them to be the instruments of any good to thee, and therefore thou shalt not prosper in them; they shall not stand thee in any stead, nor give thee any satisfaction. As there is no counsel or wisdom that can prevail against the Lord, so there is none that can prevail without him. Some read it, *The Lord hath rejected thee for thy confidences*, because thou hast dwelt so unfaithfully with him as to trust in his creatures, nay, in his enemies, when thou shouldst have trusted in him only; he has abandoned thee to that destruction from which thou thoughtest thus to have sheltered thyself; and then thou canst not prosper, for none ever either hardened himself against God, or estranged himself from God, and prospered.

C H A P. III.

The foregoing chapter was wholly taken up with reproofs and threatenings against the people of God for their apostasies from him; but in this chapter gracious invitations and encouragements are given them to return and repent, notwithstanding the multitude and greatness of their provocations, which are here aggravated, to magnify the mercy of God, and to shew, that as sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Here, (1.) It is further shewed how bad they had been, and how well they deserved to be quite abandoned, and yet how ready God was to receive them into his favour upon their repentance, ver. 1—5. (2.) The impenitency of Judah, and their persisting in sin, is aggravated from the judgments of God upon Israel, which they should have taken warning by, ver. 6—11. (3.) Great encouragements are given to these backsliders to return and repent; and promises made of great mercy which God had in store for them, and which he should prepare them for by bringing them home to himself, ver. 12—19. (4.) The charge renewed against them for their apostasy from God, and the invitation repeated to return and repent, to which is here added the words that are put in their mouth which they should make use of in their return to God, ver. 20—23.

1. **THEY** say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. 2. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. 3. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. 4. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth? 5. Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst.

These verses some make to belong to the sermon in the foregoing chapter, and they open a door of hope to those who receive the conviction of the reproofs we had, therefore God wounds that he may heal. Now observe here,

1. How basely this people had forsaken God, and gone a whoring from him. The charge runs very high here: (1.) They had multiplied their idols, and their idolatries. To have admitted one strange god among them had been bad enough, but they were insatiable in their lustings after false worship, *Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers*, ver. 1. She was become a common prostitute to idols; not a foolishly deity was set up in all the neighbourhood, but the Jews would have it presently. Where was a high place in the country but they had had an idol in it? ver. 2. Note, In repentance it is good to make sorrowful reflection upon the particular acts of sin we have been guilty of, and the several places and companies where it has been committed, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves by a particular confession of it.

(2.) They had sought opportunity for their idolatries, and had sent about to enquire for new gods: *In the high ways hast thou sat for them*, as Tamar when she put on the disguise of a harlot, Gen. xxxviii. 14. and as the foolish woman, that sits to call passengers; *who go right on their way*, Prov. ix. 14, 15. As the Arabian in the wilderness; The Arabian huckster, so some, that courts customers, or waits for the merchants, to get a good bargain, and forestall the market. Or the Arabian thief, so others, that watches for his prey; so had they waited either to court new gods to come among them, the newer the better, and the more fond they were of them; or to court others to join with them in their idolatries: they were not only sinners, but Satans; not only traitors themselves, but tempters to others.

(3.) They were grown very impudent in sin. They not only polluted themselves but their land with their whoredoms and with their wickedness, ver. 2. for it was universal and unpunished, and so became a national sin. And yet, ver. 3. *Thou hast a whore's forehead*, a brazen face of thy own. Thou refusedst to be ashamed; thou didst enough to shame thee for ever, and yet wouldst not take shame to thyself. Blushing is the colour of virtue, or at least a relic of it; but those that are past shame (we say) are past hope. Those that have an adulterer's heart, if they indulge that, will come at length to have a whore's forehead, void of all shame and modesty.

(4.) They abounded in all manner of sin. They polluted the land not only with their whoredoms, i. e. their idolatries, but with their wickedness or malice (ver. 2.) sins against the second table; for how can we think those should be true to their neighbour, that are false to their God? Nay, ver. 5. *Thou hast spoke and done evil things as thou couldst*; and wouldst have spoken and done worse, if thou hadst known how; thy will was to do it, but thou lackedst opportunity. Note, Those are wicked indeed, that sin to the utmost of their power; that never refuse to comply with a temptation, because they should not, but because they cannot.

2. How gently God had corrected them for their sins. Instead of raining fire and brimstone upon them, because like Sodom they had avowed their sin, and had gone after strange gods, as Sodom after strange flesh, he only withheld the showers from them, and that only one part of the year, there has been no latter rain; which might serve as an intimation to them of their continual dependance upon God; when they had the former rain, that was no security to them for the latter, but they must still look up to God: but it had not this effect.

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3. How justly God might have abandoned them utterly, and refused ever to receive them again; though they should return; this would have been but according to the known rule of divorces, ver. 1. *They say*, i. e. it is an adjudged case, nay, it is a case in which the law is very express, and it is what every body knows and speaks of, *Deut. xxiv. 4.* that if a woman be once put away for whoredom, and be joined to another man, her first husband shall never, upon any pretence whatsoever, take her again to be his wife; such playing fast and loose with the marriage bond would be a horrid profanation of that ordinance; and would greatly pollute that land. Observe, What the law saith in this case, *they say*, every one will say, and subscribe to the equity of the law in it; for every man finds something in himself, that forbids him to entertain one that is another man's. And in like manner they had reason to expect, that God should refuse ever to take them to be his people again, who had not only been joined to one strange god, but had played the harlot with many lovers: If we had to do with a man like ourselves, after such provocations as we had been guilty of, he would have been implacable, and we might have despaired of his being reconciled to us.

4. How graciously he not only invites them, but directs them to return to him.

1. He encourageth them to hope, that they shall find favour with him upon their repentance; though thou hast been bad, yet return again to me, ver. 1. which implies a promise that he will receive them; return, and thou shalt be welcome. God has not tied himself by the laws which he made to us, nor has he the preevish resentment that men have; he will be more kind to Israel, for the sake of his covenant with them, than ever any injured husband was to an adulterous wife; for in receiving penitents, as much as in any thing, he is God, and not man.

2. He therefore kindly expects they will repent and return to him, and directs them what to say to him, ver. 4. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me? Wilt not thou*, who hast been in such relation to me, and on whom I have laid such obligations, *wilt not thou cry unto me?* Though thou hast gone a whoring from me, yet when thou findest the folly of it, sure thou wilt think of returning to me; now at least, now at last in this thy day. *Wilt thou not at this time*, nay, wilt thou not from this time and forward cry unto me; whatever thou hast said or done hitherto, wilt thou not from this time apply thyself to me? *From this time* of conviction and correction; now thou hast been made to see thy sins, ver. 2. and to smart for them, ver. 3. wilt thou not now forsake them and return to me, saying, *I will go and return to my first husband*, for then it was better with me than now, Hos. ii. 7. Or, *from this time* that thou hast had so kind an invitation to return, and assurance that thou shalt be well received; wilt not this grace of God overcome thee? Now pardon is proclaimed, wilt thou not come in, and take the benefit of it? Sure thou wilt.

1. He expects they will claim relation to God, as their's; *Wilt thou not cry unto me, My Father*, thou art the guide of my youth? (1.) They will surely come towards him as a Father, to beg his pardon for their undutiful carriage to him: *Father, I have sinned*; and will hope to find in him the tender compassions of a father, towards a returning prodigal. They will come to him as a father, to whom they will make their complaints, and in whom they will put their confidence for relief and succour. They will now own him as their father, and themselves fatherless without him; and therefore hoping to find mercy with him, as those penitents, *Hos. xiv. 3.* (2.) They will come to him as the guide of their youth, i. e. as their husband, for so that relation is described, *Mal. ii. 14.* Though thou hast gone after many lovers, surely thou wilt at length remember the love of thine espousals, and return to the husband of thy youth. Or it may be taken more generally; as *my father*, thou art the guide of my youth. Youth needs a guide. In our return to God, we must thankfully remember that he was the guide of our youth, in the way of comfort; and we must faithfully covenant that he shall be our guide from henceforward in the way of duty, and that we will follow his guidance, and give up ourselves entirely to his conduct; that in all doubtful cases we will be determined by our religion.

2. He expects they will appeal to the mercy of God, and crave the benefit of that mercy, ver. 5. that they will reason thus with themselves for their encouragement to return to him; *Wilt he reserve his anger for ever?* Sure he will not, for he hath proclaimed his name gracious and merciful. Repenting sinners may encourage themselves with this, that though God chides, he will not always chide; though he be angry, he will not keep his anger to the end; but though he cause grief, he will have compassion, and may thus plead for reconciliation. Some understand this as describing their hypocrisy and the imprudence of that; though thou hast a whore's forehead, ver. 3. and art still doing evil as thou canst, ver. 5. yet art thou not ever and anon, crying to me, my Father; even when they were most addicted to idols, they pretended a regard to God and his service, and kept up the forms of godliness and devotion. It is a shameful thing for men thus to call God Father, and yet do the works of the devil, as the Jews, *John viii. 41.* to call him the guide of their youth, and yet gave up themselves to walk after the flesh; and to flatter themselves with expectations, that his anger shall have an end while they are continually treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

6. ¶ The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. 7. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. 9. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. 10. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. 11. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

The date of this sermon must be observed in order to the right understanding of it; it was in the days of Josiah, who set on foot a blessed work of reformation, in which he was hearty, but the people were not sincere in their compliance with it; to reprove them for that, and warn them of the consequences

consequences of their hypocrisy, is the scope of that which God here said to the prophet, and which he delivered to them. The case of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah is here compared, the *ten tribes* that revolted from the throne of David and the temple of Jerusalem, and the *two tribes* that adhered to both. The distinct history of those two kingdoms we have in the two books of the Kings, and here we have an abstract of both, as far as relates to this matter.

1. Here is a short account of Israel, the ten tribes: perhaps the prophet had just been reading the history of that kingdom, when God came to him, and said, *Hasst thou seen what backsliding Israel has done?* ver. 6. for he could not see it otherwise than in history, they having been carried into captivity long before he was born: but what we read in the histories of scripture should instruct us and affect us, as if we ourselves had been eye-witnesses of it. She is called *backsliding Israel*, because that kingdom was first found in an apostasy from the divine institutions, both in church and state. Now he had seen concerning them,

(1.) That they were wretchedly addicted to idolatry; they had *played the harlot upon every high mountain, and under every green tree*, ver. 6. i. e. they had worshipped other gods in their high places and groves; and no marvel, when from the first they had worshipped God by the images of the *golden calves* at Dan and Bethel. The way of idolatry is down-hill: they that are in love with images, and will have them, soon become in love with other gods, and will have them too; for how should they stick at the breach of the first commandment, who make no conscience of the second?

(2.) That God by his prophets had invited and encouraged them to repent and reform; ver. 7. *After she had done all these things*, for which she might justly have been abandoned, *yet I said unto her, Turn thou unto me, and I will receive thee*. Though they had forsaken both the house of David, and the house of Aaron, who both had their authority, *jure divino*, without dispute, yet God sent his prophets among them to call them to return to him, to the worship of him only, not insisting so much as one would have expected upon their return to the house of David, as that of Aaron; we read not that Elijah, the great reformer, ever mentioned that; but return to the faithful service of the true God according as they had it among them. It is serious piety that God stands upon more than even his own rituals.

(3.) That notwithstanding this they had persisted in their idolatries; but she returned not, and God saw it; he took notice of it, and was much displeased with it, ver. 8. Note, God keeps account, whether we do or no, how often he has called to us to turn to him, and we have refused.

(4.) That he had therefore cast them off, and given them up into the hands of their enemies, ver. 8. *When I saw (so it may be read) that for all the actions wherein she had committed adultery, I must dismise her, I gave her a bill of divorce*. God divorced them when he threw them out of his protection, and left them an easy prey to any that would lay hands on them; when he scattered all their synagogues and schools of the prophets, and excluded them from laying any farther claim to the covenant made with their fathers. Note, Those will justly be divorced from God, that join themselves to such as are rivals with him. For proof of this, *Go and see*, what God did to Israel.

2. Let us now see what was the case of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes. She is called *treacherous sister Judah*: A sister, because descended from the same common stock, Abraham and Jacob; but as Israel had the character of a *backslider*, so Judah is called *treacherous*, because though she professed to keep close to God when Israel was backslidden; she adhered to the kings and priests that were of God's own appointing, and did not withdraw from her allegiance; so that it was expected she should deal faithfully; yet she proved treacherous and false, and unfaithful to her professions and promises. Note, The treachery of those who pretend to cleave to God will be reckoned for, as well as the apostasy of those that openly revolt from him. Judah saw what Israel did, and what came of it, and should have taken warning: Israel's captivity was intended for Judah's admonition, but it had not the designed effect. Judah feared not, but thought herself safe because she had Levites to be her priests, and sons of David to be her kings. Note, It is an argument of great stupidity and security, when we are not wakened to a holy fear by the judgments of God upon others. It is here charged on Judah,

(1.) That when they had a wicked king that debauched them, they heartily concurred with him in his debaucheries: Judah was forward enough to *play the harlot*, to worship any idol that was introduced among them, and to join in any idolatrous usage; so that through the *lightness* (or as some read it, the *vileness and baseness*) of her whoredom; or as the margin reads it by the same and report of her whoredom, i. e. her notorious whoredom, for which she was become infamous, she *despised the land*, and made it an abomination to God; for she committed adultery with *stocks and stones*, i. e. with the most scoundrel idols, those made of wood and stone. In the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, when they were disposed to idolatry, the people were so too, and all the country was corrupted with it, and none feared the ruin which Israel by this means had brought upon themselves.

2. That when they had a good king that reformed them, they did not heartily concur with him in the reformation: And that was the present case. God tried whether they would be good in a good reign, but the evil disposition was still the same, they returned not to me with their whole heart, but feignedly, ver. 10. Josiah went farther in destroying idolatry than the best of his predecessors had done; and for his own part he turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, so it is said of him, 2 Kings xxiii. 25. The people were forced to an external compliance with him, and joined with him in keeping a very solemn passover, and in renewing their covenants with God, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 32.—xxxv. 17. but they were not sincere in it, nor were their hearts right with God: For which reason God at that very time said, *I will remove Judah out of my sight, as I removed Israel*, 2 Kings xxiii. 27. because Judah was not removed from their sin by the sight of Israel's removal from their land. Hypocritical reformation, and ineffectual ones, bode ill to a people. We deceive ourselves, if we think to deceive God by a feigned return to him; I know no religion without sincerity.

3. The case of these sister kingdoms is compared, and judgment given upon the comparison, that of the two Judah was the worse, ver. 11. *Israel has justified herself more than Judah*, i. e. is not so bad as Judah is. The comparative justification will stand Israel in little stead; what will it avail us to say we are not so bad as others, when yet we are not really good ourselves? But it will serve as an aggravation of the sin of Judah, which was in two respects worse than that of Israel. (1.) That more was expected from Judah than from Israel; so that Judah dealt treacherously, they violated a more sacred profession, and falsified a more solemn promise than Israel did. (2.) That Judah might have taken warning by the ruin of Israel for their idolatry, and would not. God's judgments upon others, if they be not means of our reformation, will help to aggravate our destruction. The prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxiii. 11. makes the same comparison between Jerusalem and Samaria, that this prophet here makes between Judah and Israel, nay, and Ezek. xvi. 48. between Jerusalem and Sodom, and Jerusalem is made the worst of the three.

12. ¶ Go and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, faith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, faith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. 13. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, faith the LORD. 14. Turn, O backsliding children, faith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: 15. And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. 16. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days faith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. 17. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD: and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. 18. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. 19. But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me.

Here is a great deal of gospel in these verses, both that which was always gospel, God's readiness to pardon sin, and to receive and entertain returning repenting sinners; and those blessings which were in a special manner reserved for gospel-times, the forming and founding of the gospel church by the bringing of the children of God into it that were scattered abroad, the superseding of the ceremonial law, and the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, typified by the uniting of Israel and Judah in their return out of captivity.

The prophet is directed to proclaim these words towards the north, for they are a call to backsliding Israel, the ten tribes that were carried captive into Assyria, which lay north from Jerusalem: That way he must look to shew that God had not forgotten them, though their brethren had, and to upbraid the men of Judah with their obstinacy, and refusing to answer the calls given them. As good call to them who lay many hundred miles off in the land of the north, they will as soon hear as these unbelieving and disobedient people: backsliding Israel will sooner accept of mercy, and have the benefit of it, than treacherous Judah. And perhaps the proclaiming of these words towards the north, looks as far forward as the preaching of repentance and remission of sins unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. A call to Israel in the land of the north, is a call to others in that land, even as many as belong to the election of grace; when it was suspected that Christ would go to the dispersed Jews among the Gentiles, it was concluded he would teach the Gentiles, John vii. 35. So here,

1. Here is an invitation given to backsliding Israel, and in them to the backsliding Gentiles, to return unto God, the God from whom they had revolted, ver. 12. Return, thou backsliding Israel. And again, ver. 14. Turn O backsliding children, repent of your backslidings; return to your allegiance; come back to that good way which you have missed, and out of which you have turned aside. Pursuant to this invitation, (1.) They are encouraged to return; Repent and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out, Acts iii. 19. You have incurred God's displeasure, but return to me, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: God's anger is ready to fall upon sinners, as a lion falls on his prey, and there is none to deliver; as a mountain of lead falling on them to sink them past recovery into the lowest hell. But if they repent it shall be turned away, Isa. xii. 1. I will not keep mine anger for ever, but will be reconciled, for I am merciful. We that are sinful were for ever undone if God were not merciful; but the goodness of his nature encourageth us to hope, that if we by repentance undo what we have done against him, he will by a pardon unsay what he has said against us. (2.) They are directed how to return; ver. 13. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, own thyself in fault, and thereby take shame to thyself, and give glory to God. I will not keep my anger for ever; that is a previous promise, you shall be delivered from that anger of God which is everlasting from the wrath to come; but upon what terms? very easy and reasonable ones, only acknowledge thy sins; if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, that the terms of pardon and peace were brought so low, and yet they would not come up to them. If the profit had bid thee do some great things, wouldst thou not have done it? how much more when he saith only acknowledge thine iniquity? 2 Kings v. 13. In confessing sin, (1.) We must own the corruption of our nature; acknowledge thine iniquity; the perverseness and irregularity of thy nature. (2.) We must own our actual sins, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, hast affronted him and offended him. (3.) We must own the multitude of our transgressions, that thou hast scattered thy ways to the strangers, run hither and thither in pursuit of thine idols, under every green tree. Wherever thou hast rambl'd thou hast left behind thee the marks of thy folly. (4.) We must aggravate our sin from the disobedience that there is in it to the divine law. The sinfulness of sin is the worst thing in it, ye have not obeyed my voice; acknowledge that, and let that humble you more than any thing else.

2. Here are precious promises made to these backsliding children if they do return; which were in part fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, many that belonged to the ten tribes having perhaps joined themselves to those of the two tribes in the prospect of their deliverance, and returning with them; but it is to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, and the gathering together of the children of God that were scattered abroad to that. Return, for though you are backsliders, yet you are children; nay, though a treacherous wife, yet a wife, for I am married to you, ver. 14. and will not disown the relation. Thus God remembers his covenant with their fathers, that marriage covenant, and in consideration of that he remembers their land, Lev. xxvi. 42.

1. He promises to gather them together from all places whither they are dispersed and scattered abroad, *Jer. iii. 14. I will take you, one of a city and two of a family, or clan; and I will bring you to Zion.* All those that by repentance return to their duty, shall return to their former comfort. Observe, (1.) God will graciously receive those that return to him, nay, it is he that by his distinguishing grace takes them out from among the rest that persist in their backslidings, and if he had left them they had been undone. (2.) Of the many that have backslidden from God, there are but few, very few in comparison, that return to him, like the gleanings of the vintage: *One of a city, and two of a country:* Christ's flock is a little flock, and few there be that find the *fruit gate*. (3.) Of those few, though dispersed, yet not one shall be lost. Though there be but *one in a city*, God will find out that one; he shall not be overlooked in a crowd, but shall be brought to Zion, safe to heaven. The scattered Jews shall be brought to Jerusalem, and those of the ten tribes shall be as welcome there as those of the two: God's chosen, scattered all the world over, shall be brought to the *gospel church*, that mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, that holy hill on which Christ reigns.

2. He promiseth to set those over them that shall be every way blessings to them, *ver. 15. I will give you pastors after my heart*, alluding to the character given of David when God pitched upon him to be king, *1 Sam. xiii. 14. The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart.* Observe, (1.) When a church is gathered it must be governed. I will bring them to Zion, not to live as they list, but to be under discipline; not as wild beasts, that range at pleasure, but as sheep, that are under the direction of a shepherd; *I will give them pastors*, i. e. both magistrates and ministers, both are God's ordinance for the support of this kingdom. (2.) It is well with a people when their pastors are *after God's own heart*; such as they should be, such as we would have them be, that shall make his will their rule in all their administrations; and such as endeavour in some measure to conform to his example; that rule for him, and as they are capable, rule like him. (3.) These are pastors after God's own heart, that make it their business to feed the flock, not to feed themselves and fleece the flocks, but to do all they can for the good of those that are under their charge; that feed them with wisdom and understanding, i. e. wisely and understandingly, as David fed them, in the integrity of his heart, and by the skillfulness of his hand, *Psal. lxxviii. 72.* Those that are not only pastors, but teachers must feed them with the word of God, which is wisdom and understanding, which is able to make us wise to salvation.

3. He promiseth that there shall be no more occasion for the ark of the covenant, which had been so much the glory of the tabernacle first, and afterwards of the temple, and was the token of God's presence with them; that shall be set aside, and there shall be no more enquiry after, nor enquiring of it, *ver. 16. When ye be multiplied and increased in the land, i. e. when the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, which by the accession of the Gentiles will bring into the church a vast increase (and the days of the Messiah the Jewish Masters themselves acknowledge to be here intended) then they shall say no more. The ark of the covenant of the Lord, they shall have it no more among them to value, or value themselves by, because they shall have a pure spiritual way of worship set up, in which there shall be no occasion for any of those external ordinances; with the ark of the covenant; the whole ceremonial law shall be set aside, and all the institutions of it; for Christ, the truth of all those types exhibited to us in the word and sacraments of the New Testament, will be to us instead of all. It is very likely (whatever the Jews suggest to the contrary) that the ark of the covenant was in the second temple, being restored by Cyrus with other the vessels of the house of the Lord, Ezra i. 7. But in the gospel temple Christ is the ark, he is the propitiary, or mercy-seat, and it is the spiritual presence of God in his ordinances that we are now to expect. Many expressions are here used concerning the setting aside of the ark, that it shall not come to mind, that they shall not remember it, they shall not visit it, that none of these things shall be any more done; for the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, John iv. 24. But this variety of expression is, used to shew, that the ceremonies of the law of Moses should be totally and finally abolished, never to be used any more, but that it would be with difficulty that those who had been so long wedded to them should be weaned from them; and that they would not quite let them go till their holy city and holy house should both be levelled with the ground.*

4. He promiseth that the gospel church, here called Jerusalem shall become eminent and conspicuous, *ver. 17. Two things shall make it famous.* (1.) God's special residence and dominion in it. It shall be called, *The throne of the Lord*; the throne of his glory, for that shines forth in the church; the throne of his government, for that also is erected there: there he rules his willing people by his word and Spirit, and brings every thought into obedience to himself. As the gospel got ground, this throne of the Lord was set up there where Satan's feet had been. It is especially the throne of his grace, for they that by faith come to this Jerusalem, come to God the judge of all, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 22, 23. (2.) The accession of the Gentiles to it. *All the nations shall be disciples, and so gathered to the church, and shall become subject to that throne of the Lord which is there set up, and devoted to the honour of that name of the Lord which is there both manifested and called upon.*

5. He promiseth that there should be a wonderful reformation wrought in those that are gathered to the church, *they shall not walk any more after the imaginations of their evil hearts.* They shall not live as they list, but live by rule; not do according to their own corrupt appetites, but according to the will of God. See what leads in sin, the imagination of our own evil hearts; and what sin is, it is walking after that imagination, being governed by fancy and humour; and what converting grace doth, it takes us off from walking after our own inventions, and brings us to be governed by religion and right reason.

6. That Judah and Israel shall be happily united in one body, *ver. 18.* They were so in their return out of captivity, and their settlement again in Canaan; *The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel*, as being perfectly agreed, and become one stick in the hand of the Lord, as Ezekiel also foretold, *chap. xxxvii. 16.* Both Assyria and Chaldaea fell into the hands of Cyrus, and his proclamation extended to all the Jews in all his dominions. And therefore we have reason to think that many of the house of Israel came with those of Judah out of the land of the north; though at first there returned but forty-two thousand whom we have no account of, *Ezra ii.* yet Josephus saith, *Antiq. lib. xi. cap. 4.* that some few years after, under Darius, Zerubbabel went and fetched up above four millions of souls to the land that was given for an inheritance to their fathers. And we never read of such animosities and enmities between Israel and Judah as had been formerly. And this happy coalescence between Israel and Judah in Canaan, was a type of the uniting of the Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church, when all the enmities being slain, they should become one sheepfold under one shepherd.

3. Here is some difficulty started, that lies in the way of all this mercy, but an expedient is found to get over it.

1. God asks, *How shall I do this for thee?* not as if God shewed favours with reluctance, as he punisheth with a *How shall I give thee up?* *Hos. xi. 8, 9.* No, though he is slow to anger, he is swift to shew mercy. But it intimates, that we are utterly unworthy of his favours, that we have no reason to expect them, that there is nothing in us to deserve them, and we can lay no claim to them. And that he contrives how to do it in such a way as may save the honour of his justice and holiness in the government of the world; means must be devised that his banished be not for ever expelled from him, *2 Sam. xiv. 14.* How shall I do it? (1.) Even backsliders if they return and repent shall be put among the children: and who could ever have expected that? Behold, what manner of love is this? *1 John iii. 1.* How could we that are so mean and weak, so worthless and unworthy, and so provoking, ever be put among the children? (2.) Those whom God puts among the children, to them he will give the pleasant land, the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands, that goodly heritage of the hosts of nations, which nations and their hosts wish for, and prefer before their own country; or which the hosts of the nations have now got possession of; it was a type of heaven, where there are pleasures far evermore; now who could expect a place in that pleasant land that has so often despised it, *Psal. cvi. 24.* and is so unworthy of it, and unfit for it? Is this the manner of men?

2. He doth himself return answer to this question, but I said, *Thou shalt call me, My Father.* God doth himself answer all the objections that are taken from our unworthiness, or they would never be got over. (1.) That he may put returning penitents among the children, he will give them the Spirit of adoption, teaching them to cry *Abba, Father*, *Gal. iv. 6.* Thou shalt call me, My Father. shalt return to me, and resign thyself to me as a Father, and that shall recommend thee to my favour. (2.) That he may give them the pleasant land, he will put his fear in their hearts, that they may never turn from him, but may persevere to the end.

20. ¶ Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD. 21. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God. 22. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God. 23. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. 24. For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. 25. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

Here is, (1.) The charge God exhibits against Israel for their treacherous departures from him, *ver. 20.* As an adulterous wife elopes from her husband, so have they gone a whoring from God. They were joined to God by a marriage-covenant, but they broke that covenant, they dealt treacherously with God, who had always dealt kindly and faithfully with them. Treacherous dealing with men like ourselves is bad enough but to deal treacherously with God; is to deal treafurably.

2. Their conviction, and confession of the truth of this charge, *ver. 21.* When God reproved them for their apostasy, there were some among them, even such as God would take, and bring to Zion, whose voice was heard upon the high places weeping and praying, humbling themselves before the God of their fathers, lamenting their calamities and their sins, the procuring cause of them: for this is that which they lament, for this they bemoan themselves, that they have perverted their ways, and forgotten the Lord their God. Note, 1. Sin is the perverting of our way, it is turning aside to crooked ways, and perverting that which is right. 2. Forgetting the Lord our God is at the bottom of all sin: if men would remember God, his eye upon them, and their obligation to him, they would not transgress as they do. 3. By sin we embarrass ourselves, and bring ourselves into trouble, for that also is the perverting of our way, *Lam. iii. 9.* 4. Prayers and tears will become those whose consciences tell them that they have perverted their ways, and forgotten their God. When the foolishness of man perverteth his way, his heart is apt to fret against the Lord, *Prov. xix. iii.* whereas it should be melted and poured out before him.

3. The invitation God gives them to return to him, *ver. 22. Return, ye backsliding children:* He call them children in tenderness and compassion to them; foolish and froward as children, yet his sons; whom though he corrects he will not disinherit; for though they are refractory children (so some render it) yet they are children. God bears with such children, and so must parents. When they are convinced of sin, *ver. 21.* and humbled for that, then they are prepared, and then they are invited to return; as Christ invites those to him that are weary and heavy laden. The promise to those that return is, *I will heal your backslidings;* I will comfort you under the grief you are in for your backslidings; deliver you out of the troubles you have brought yourselves into by your backslidings, and cure you of your refractoriness and bent to backslide. God will heal our backslidings by his pardoning mercy, his quieting peace, and his renewing grace.

4. The ready consent they gave to this invitation, and their cheerful compliance with it; Behold, we come unto thee. This is an echo to God's call; as a voice returned from broken walls, so this from broken hearts; God saith, *Return;* they answer, *Behold, we come.* It is an immediate, speedy answer, without delay, not we will come hereafter, but we do come now; we need not take time to consider of it. Not, we come towards thee but we come to thee, we will make a thorough turn of it. Observe how unanimous they are, we come; one and all.

(1.) They come devoting themselves to God as their's. *Thou art the Lord our God,* we take thee to be our's, we give up ourselves to thee to be thine; whither shall we go but to thee? for it is our sin and folly that we have gone from thee. It is very comfortable in our returns to God after our backslidings to look up to him as our's in covenant.

(2.) They come disclaiming all expectations of relief and succour but from God only; *In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains;* we now see our folly in relying upon creature confidences, and will never so deceive ourselves any more. They worshipped their idols upon hills and mountains, *ver. 6.* and they had a multitude of

of idols upon their mountains which they had sought unto, and put a confidence in but now they will have no more to do with them. In vain do we look for any thing that is good from them, while from God we may look for every thing that is good; even salvation itself. Therefore,

(3.) They come depending upon God only as their God. *In the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.* He is the Lord, and he only can save, he can save when all other succours and saviours fail: and he is our God, and will in his own way and time work salvation for us. It is very applicable to the great salvation from sin, which Jesus Christ wrought out for us, that is the *salvation of the Lord*, his great salvation.

(4.) They come justifying God in their troubles, and judging themselves for their sins, ver. 24, 25. (1.) They impute all the calamities they had been under to their idols: They had not only done them no good, but done them abundance of mischief, all the mischief that had been done them. *Shame* (i. e. the idol, that shameful thing) *has devoured the labours of our fathers.* Note, 1. True penitents have learned to call sin *shame*, even the beloved sin that has been as an idol to them, which they have been most pleased with and proud of, even that they shall call a scandalous thing, shall put contempt upon and be ashamed of. (2.) True penitents have learned to call sin *death* and ruin, and to charge upon it all the mischiefs they suffer. It has devoured all those good things which our fathers laboured for, and left to us; we have found from our youth that our idolatry hath been the destruction of our prosperity. Children often throw away upon their lusts, that which their fathers took a great deal of pains for; and it is well if at length they are brought (as these here) to see the folly of it, and to call those vices their *shame*, which have wasted their estates and devoured the labour of their fathers. They instance in the labour of their fathers, which their idols had devoured, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. (1.) Their idolatries have provoked God to bring these desolating judgments upon them, which had ruined their country and families, and made their estates a prey, and their children captives to the conquering enemy. They had procured these things to themselves. Or rather, (2.) These had been sacrificed to their idols, had been separated unto that *shame*, Hof. ix. 19. and they had devoured them without mercy, did eat the fat of their sacrifices, Deut. xxxiii. 38. even their human sacrifices. (2.) They take to themselves the shame of their sin and folly, ver. 25. *We lie down in our shame*, being unable to bear up under it, our confusion covereth us, i. e. both our penal and penitential shame. Sin has laid us under such rebukes of God's providence, and such reproaches of our own consciences, as surround us and fill us with shame. For we have sinned, and shame came in with sin, and still attends upon it. We are sinners by descent, guilt and corruption are entailed upon us; we and our fathers have sinned; we were sinners betimes, we began early in a course of sin, we have sinned from our youth; we have continued in it, have sinned even unto this day, though often called to repent and forsake our sins. And that which is the malignity of sin, the worst thing in it, is the affront we have put upon God by it; we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God forbidding us to sin, and commanding us when we have sinned to repent. Now all this seems to be the language of the penitents of the house of Israel, ver. 20. of the ten tribes; either of those that were in captivity, or those of them that remained in their own land. And the prophet takes notice of their repentance, to provoke the men of Judah to a holy emulation. David used it as an argument with the elders of Judah, that it would be a shame for them that were his bone and his flesh, to be the last in bringing the king back, when the men of Israel appeared forward in it, 2 Sam. xix. 11, 12. So the prophet excites Judah to repent, because Israel did: and well it were if the zeal of others less likely, would provoke us to strive to get before them, and go beyond them in that which is good.

C H A P. IV.

It should seem that the two first verses of this chapter might better have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, for they are directed to Israel, the ten tribes, by way of reply to their compliance with God's call directing and encouraging them to hold their resolution, ver. 1, 2. The rest of the chapter concerns Judah and Jerusalem. (1.) They are called to repent and reform, ver. 3, 4. (2.) They are warned of the advance of Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against them; and are told it is for their sins, from which they are again exhorted to warn themselves, ver. 5—18. (3.) To affect them the more with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, the prophet doth himself bitterly lament it, and sympathize with his people in the calamities it brought upon them, and the plunge it brought them to, representing it as a reduction of the world to its first chaos, ver. 19—31.

IF thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, I return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove. 2. And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

When God called to backsliding Israel to return, chap. iii. 22. they presently answered, *Lord, we return*; now God here takes notice of their answer, and by way of reply to it.

1. He directs them how to pursue their good resolutions. Dost thou say, thou wilt return? (1.) Then thou must return unto me; make a thorough work of it. Do not only turn from thine idolatries, but return to the instituted worship of the God of Israel. Or, thou must return speedily, and not delay. As *Isa. xxi. 12. If ye will enquire, enquire ye*; so if you will return unto me, return ye: do not talk of it, but do it. (2.) Thou must utterly abandon all sin, and not retain any of the relics of idolatry; Put away thine abominations out of my sight, i. e. out of all places, for every place is under the eye of God; especially out of the temple, the house which he had in a particular manner his eye upon to see that it was kept clean. It intimates, that their idolatries were not only obvious but offensive to the eye of God: they were abominations which he could not endure the sight of, therefore put them away out of my sight, i. e. put them away for this reason, because they are a provocation to the pure eyes of God's glory. Sin must be put away out of the heart, else it is not put away out of God's sight, for the heart and all that is in it lies open before his eye. (3.) They must not return to sin again, so some understand that, *thou shalt not remove*, reading it, *thou shalt not, or must not wander.* If thou wilt put away their abominations, and wilt not wander after them again, as thou hast done, all shall be well. (4.) They must give unto God the glory due unto his name, ver. 2. *Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth.* His being shall be with thee the most sacred truth, than which nothing can be more sure; and his judgment the supreme court to which thou shalt appeal, and than which nothing can be more awful. Swearing is an act of religious worship, in which we are to give honour to God three ways. (1.) We

must swear by the true God only; and not by the creatures, or by false gods; by the God that *liveth*, and not by the gods that are dead, and dumb, and dead; by him only, and not by the Lord and by Malcham, as Zeph. i. 5. (2.) We must swear that only which is true, in truth and in righteousness; not daring to assert that which is false, or which we do not know to be true; or to assert that as certain which is doubtful, or to promise that which we mean not to perform, or to violate the promise we have made. To say that which is untrue, or to do that which is unrighteous, is bad, but to back either with an oath is much worse. (3.) We must do it solemnly, swear in judgment, i. e. when thou art judicially called to it, and not in common conversation. Rash swearing is as great a profanation of God's name, as solemn swearing is an honour to it. See Deut. x. 20. Matt. v. 34—37.

2. He encourageth them to keep in this good mind, and adhere to their resolutions. If the scattered Israelites will thus return to God, (1.) They shall be blessed themselves; for to that sense the first words may be read: *If thou wilt return to me, then thou shalt return*, i. e. thou shalt be brought back out of thy captivity into thy own land again, as was of old promised, Deut. iv. 29.—xxx. 2. Or, then thou shalt rest in me, shalt return to me as thy rests even whilst thou art in the land of thy captivity.

(2.) They shall be blessings to others; for their returning to God again, will be a means of others turning to him that never knew him. If thou wilt own the living Lord, thou wilt thereby influence the nations among whom thou art to bless themselves in him, to place their happiness in his favour and to think themselves happy in being brought to the fear of him. See *Isa. lxxv. 16. They shall bless themselves in the God of truth*, and not in false gods; shall do themselves the honour, and give themselves the satisfaction to join themselves to him, and then in him shall they glory, they shall make him their glory; and shall please, nay shall pride themselves in the blessed change they have made. Those that part with their sins to return to God, however they scrupled the bargain at first, when they go away, then they boast.

3. ¶ For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. 4. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

The prophet here turns his speech in God's name to the men of the place where he lived: We have heard what words he proclaimed towards the north, chap. iii. 12. for the comfort of those that were now in captivity, and were humbled under the hand of God; let us now see what he saith to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, who were now in prosperity, for their conviction and awakening. In these two verses he exhorts them to repentance and reformation, as the only way left them to repent the desolating judgments that were ready to break in upon them. Observe,

1. The duties required of them, which they are concerned to do. (1.) They must do by their hearts as they do by their ground, that they expect any good of; they must plough it up, ver. 3. *Break up your fallow ground.* Plough to yourself a ploughing, or plough up your plough land that you sow not among thorns, i. e. that you may not labour in vain, for your own safety and welfare, as those do that sow good seed among thorns; and as you have been doing a great while. Put yourselves into a frame fit to receive mercy from God, and put away all that which keeps it from you, and then you may expect to receive mercy, and to prosper in your endeavours to help yourselves. Note, (1.) An unconvinced unhumiliated heart is like fallow ground, ground untilld, unoccupied. It is ground capable of improvement; it is our ground, let out to us, and we must be accountable for it; but it is fallow, it is unfenced, and lies common, it is unfruitful, and of no advantage to the owner, and (which is principally intended) it is overgrown with thorns and weeds, which is the natural product of the corrupt heart, if it be not renewed with grace. Rain and sun-shine are lost upon it, Heb. vi. 7, 8. (2.) We are concerned to get this fallow-ground ploughed up; we must search into our own hearts, let the word of God divide (as the plough doth) between the joints and the marrow, Heb. iv. 12. We must rent our hearts, Joel ii. 13. We must pluck up those corruptions by the root, that as thorns choke both our endeavours and our expectations, Hos. x. 11.

(1.) They must do that to their souls, which was done to their bodies when they are taken into covenant with God, ver. 4. *Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your heart.* Mortify the flesh and the lusts of it. Pare off that superfluity of naughtiness, which hinders your receiving with meekness the engraven word, Jam. i. 21. Boast not of, and rest not in, the circumcision of the body, for that is but a sign, and will not serve without the thing signified. It was a dedicating sign. Do that in sincerity, which was done in profession by your circumcision; devote and consecrate yourselves unto the Lord, to be to him a peculiar people. Circumcision was an obligation to keep the law, lay yourselves afresh under that obligation. It was a seal of the righteousness of faith, lay hold then of that righteousness, and so circumcise yourself unto the Lord.

2. The danger they are threatened with, which they are concerned to avoid. Repent and reform, lest my fury come forth like fire, which it is now ready to do, as that fire which came forth from the Lord, and consumed the sacrifices, and which was always kept burning upon the altar, and none might quench it; such is God's wrath against impenitent sinners, because of the evil of their doings. Note, 1. That which is to be dreaded by us more than any thing else, is the wrath of God; for that is the spring and bitterness of all present miseries, and will be the quintessence and perfection of everlasting misery. 2. It is the evil of our doings that kindles the fire of God's wrath against us. 3. The consideration of the imminent danger we are in, of falling and perishing under his wrath, should awaken us with all possible care to sanctify ourselves to God's glory, and to see to it that we be sanctified by his grace.

5. Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defended cities. 6. Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. 7. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way: he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant. 8. For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us. 9. And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, that the

the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder. 10 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul. 11. At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse. 12. *Even* a full wind from those places shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them. 13. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled. 14. O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? 15. For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim. 16. Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, *that* watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. 17. As keepers of a field, are they against her round about: because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD. 18. Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.

God's usual method is to warn before he wounds: In these verses accordingly, God gives notice to the Jews of the general desolation that would shortly be brought upon them by a foreign invasion. This must be declared and published in all the cities of Judah, and streets of Jerusalem, that all might hear and fear; and by this loud alarm be either brought to repentance, or left inexcusable. The prediction of this calamity is here given very largely, and in lively expressions, which one would think should have awakened and affected the most stupid. Observe,

1. The war proclaimed, and general notice given of the advance of the enemy. It is published now, some years before, by the prophet, but since this will be slighted, it shall be punished after another manner, when the judgment is actually breaking in, ver. 5, 6. The trumpet must be blown, the standard must be set up, summons must be issued out to the people to gather together, and to draw towards Zion, either to guard that, or expecting to be guarded by it. There must be a general rendezvous, the militia must be raised, and all the forces mustered. Those that are able men, and fit for service, must go into the defended cities, to garrison them; those that are weak and would lessen their provisions, but not increase their strength, must retire, and get away, and not stay.

2. An express arrived with intelligence of the approach of the king of Babylon and his army. It is an evil that God will bring from the north, as he had said, chap. i. 15. *even a great destruction*, beyond all that had yet come upon the nation of the Jews. The enemy is here compared,

(1.) To a lion that comes up from his thicket when he is hungry, to seek his prey, ver. 7. The helpless beasts are so terrified with his roaring (as some report) that they cannot flee from him, and so become an easy prey to him. Nebuchadnezzar is this roaring, tearing lion, the destroyer of the nations, that has laid many countries waste, and now is on his way on full speed towards the land of Judah. The destroyer of the Gentiles shall be the destroyer of the Jews too, when they have by their idolatry made themselves like the Gentiles. He is gone forth from his place, from Babylon, or the place of the rendezvous of his army, on purpose against this land; that is the prey he has now his eye upon, not to plunder it only, but to make it desolate: and herein he shall succeed to that degree, that the cities shall be laid waste without inhabitants, shall be overgrown with grass as a field, so some read it.

(2.) To a drying, blasting wind (ver. 11.) a parching scorching wind, which spoils the fruits of the earth and withers them. Not a wind that brings rain, but such as useth to come out of the north, which drives away rain, Prov. xxv. 23. but brings something worse instead of it, such shall this evil but of the north be to this people; a black freezing wind which they can neither fence against nor flee from, but wherever they go, it shall surround and pursue them; they cannot see it before it comes, but when it comes they shall feel it. It is a wind of the high places in the wilderness or plain, or that beats upon the tops of the hills, or that carries all before it in the plain, where there is no shelter, but the ground is all champaign. It shall come in its full force towards the daughters of my people, that have been brought up so tenderly and delicately that they could not endure to have the wind blow upon them. Now this fierce wind shall come against them not to fan or cleanse them, not such a gentle wind as is used in winnowing corn, but a full wind, ver. 12. a strong and violent wind, blowing full upon them: this shall come to me, or rather for me; it shall come with commission from God, and shall accomplish that for which he sends it: for this, as other stormy winds, fulfill his word.

(3.) To clouds and whirlwinds for swiftness, ver. 13. The Chaldean army shall come up as clouds driven with the wind; so thick shall they stand, so fast shall they march: and it shall be to no purpose to offer to stop them, or to make head against them, no more than to arrest a cloud, or give check to a whirlwind. The horses are swifter than eagles when they fly upon their prey, it is in vain to think either of opposing them, or of out-running them.

(4.) To watchers and the keepers of a field, ver. 15, 16, 17. The voice declares from Dan, a city which lay farthest north of all the cities of Canaan and therefore received the first tidings of this evil from the north, and hastened it to mount Ephraim, that part of the land of Israel which lay next to Judah: they received the news of the affliction, and transmitted it to Jerusalem. All news flies apace; and an impenitent people, that hates to be reformed, can expect no other but ill news. Now, what is the news? Tell the nations, those mixed nations that now inhabit the cities of the ten tribes, mention it to them, that they may provide for their own safety; but publish it against Jerusalem, that is the place aimed at, the game shot at, let them know that watchers are come from a far country, i. e. soldiers that will watch all opportunities to do mischief. Private soldiers we call private sentinels, or watchmen. They are coming on a full career, and give their voice against the cities of Judah, they designed to invest them, and make themselves masters of them, and to attack them with loud shouts, as sure of

victory. As keepers of a field surround it, to keep all out from it, so shall they surround the cities of Judah, to keep all in them, till they be constrained to surrender at discretion; they are against her round about compassing her in on every side. See Luke xix. 43. As formerly the good angels, those watchers and holy ones, were like keepers of a field to Jerusalem, watching about it, that nothing might go in to its prejudice; so now their enemies were as watchers and keepers of a field surrounding it, that nothing might go in to its relief and succour.

3. The lamentable cause of this judgment; how is it that Judah and Jerusalem come to be thus abandoned to ruin? See how it came to this. (1.) They sinned against God, it was all along of themselves: *She has been rebellious against me, saith the Lord*, ver. 17. Their enemies surround them as keepers of a field, because they had taken up arms against their rightful Lord and sovereign, and were to be seized as rebels. The Chaldeans are breaking in upon them, and it was sin that opened the gap at which they entered, *Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee*, ver. 18. thy evil way, and thy doings that have not been good. It was not a false step or two that did them this mischief, but their way and course of living was bad. Note, Sin is the procuring cause of all our troubles. Those that go on in sin, while they are endeavouring to ward off mischiefs with one hand, are at the same time pulling them upon their own heads with the other. (2.) God was angry with them for their sin. It is the fierce anger of the Lord that makes the army of the Chaldeans thus fierce, thus furious; that is kindled against us, and is not turned back from us, ver. 8. Note, In men's anger against us, and the violence of that, we must see and own God's anger and the power of that. If that were turned back from us, our enemies should not come forward against us. (3.) In his just and holy anger he condemned them to this dreadful punishment: *Now also will I give sentence against them*, ver. 12. The execution was done, not in a heat, but in pursuance of a sentence solemnly passed, according to equity, and upon mature deliberation. Some read it, *Now will I do execution upon them*, according to the doom formerly passed; and we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and the execution of that judgment.

4. The lamentable effects of this judgment upon the first alarm given to it. (1.) The people that should fight shall quite despair, and shall not have a heart to make the least stand against the enemy, ver. 8. *For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl*; i. e. you will do so, when the cry is made through the kingdom, *Arm, Arm*: all will be seized with a consternation, and all put into confusion; instead of girding on the sword, they will gird on the sackcloth; instead of animating one another to a vigorous resistance, they will lament and howl, and so dishearten one another. While the enemy is yet at a distance, they will give up all for gone, and cry, *Woe unto us, for we are spoiled*, ver. 13. We are all undone, the spoilers will certainly carry the day, and it is in vain to make head against them. Judah and Jerusalem had been famed for valiant men, but see what is the effect of sin, by depriving men of their confidence towards God, it deprives them of their courage towards men. (2.) Their great men that should contrive for the public safety, shall be at their wit's end: ver. 9. *At that day, the heart of the king shall perish*, both his wisdom and his courage; despairing of success, he shall have no spirit to do any thing, and if he had, he will not know what to do. His princes and privy-counsellors, that should animate and advise him, shall be as much at a loss, and as much in despair as he. See how easily, how effectually God can bring ruin upon a people that are doomed to it, purely by dispiriting them, taking away the heart of the chief of them, Job xii. 20—24. cutting off the spirit of princes, Psal. lxxvi. 12. The business of the priests was to encourage the people in time of war; they were to say to the people, *fear not, and let not your hearts faint*, Deut. xx. 2, 3. They were to blow the trumpets, for an assurance to them, that in the day of battle they should be remembered before the Lord their God, Numb. x. 9. But now the priests themselves shall be astonished, and shall have no heart themselves to do their office, and therefore not likely to put spirit into the people. The prophets too, the false prophets, that had cried peace to them shall be put into the greatest amazement imaginable, seeing their own guilty blood ready to be shed by that sword, which they had many a time told the people there was no danger of. Note, God's judgments come with the greatest terror upon those that have been most secure. Our Saviour foretels that at the last destruction of Jerusalem men's hearts should fail them for fear, Luke xxi. 26. And it is common for those, who have cheated and flattered people into a carnal security, not only to fail them, but to discourage them when the trouble comes.

5. The prophets complaint of the people's being deceived, ver. 10. It is expressed strangely, as we read it, *Ah, Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people, saying, Ye shall have peace*; We are sure God deceives none; let no man say when he is tempted or deluded, that God has tempted or deluded him. But, (1.) The people deceived themselves with the promises that God had made in general of his favour to that nation, and the many peculiar privileges with which they were dignified; building upon them, though they took no care to perform the conditions, on which the accomplishment of those promises and the continuance of those privileges did depend; and had no regard to the threatenings, which in the law were set over against those promises. Thus they cheated themselves, and then wickedly complained, that God had cheated them. (2.) The false prophets deceived them with promises of peace, which they made them in God's name, chap. xxiii. 17—xxvii. 9. If God had sent them, he had indeed greatly deceived the people, but he did not. It was the people's fault that they gave them credit, and here also they deceived themselves. (3.) God had permitted the false prophets to deceive, and the people to be deceived by them, giving both up to strong delusions, to punish them for not receiving the truth in the love of it: Herein the Lord was righteous, but the prophet complains of it as the worst judgment of all, for by this means they had been hardened in their sins. (4.) It may be read with an interrogation, *Hast thou indeed thus deceived this people?* It is plain they are greatly deceived, for they expect peace whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul, i. e. it is a killing sword, abundance of lives are lost, and more like to be: Now, was it God that deceived them? No, he had often given them warning of judgments in general, and of this in particular; but their own prophets deceive them, and cry peace to them, to whom the God of heaven doth not speak peace. It is a piteous thing, and that which every good man greatly laments, to see people flattered into their own ruin, and promising themselves peace, when war is at the door; and this we should complain of to God, who alone can prevent such a fatal delusion.

6. The prophet's endeavour to undeceive them; when the prophet they loved and caressed dealt falsely with them, he whom they hated and persecuted dealt faithfully.

1. He shews them their wound; they were loth to see it, very loth to have it searched into; but if they will allow themselves the liberty of a free thought, they might discover their punishment in their sin, ver. 18. *This is thy wickedness, because it is bitter*: Now thou seest that it is a bitter thing to depart from God and will certainly be bitterness in the latter end, chap. ii. 19. It produced bitter effects, and grief that reacheth unto the heart, toucheth to the quick, and in the most tender part; the sword reacheth to the soul

ver. 10. God can make trouble reach the heart, even of those that would lay nothing to heart. And by this thou mayest see *what is thy wickedness*, that it is a bitter thing, a root of bitterness, that bears gall and wormwood; and that it has reached to the heart; it is the corruption of the soul, of the imagination of the thought of the heart. If the heart was not polluted with sin, it would not be disturbed and disquieted as it is with trouble.

2. He shews them the cure, ver. 14. Since *thy wickedness reacheth to the heart*, there the application must be made, *O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved*. By Jerusalem, he means each one of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for every man has a heart of his own to take care of, and it is personal reformation that must help the public. Every one must return from his own evil way, and in order to that cleanse his own evil heart. And let the heart of the city too be purified, not the suburbs only as the out-skirts of it; the vitals of a state must be amended by the reformation of those that have the commanding influence upon it. Note, 1. Reformation is absolutely necessary to salvation; there is no other way of preventing judgments, or turning them away when we are threatened with them, but taking away the sin by which we have procured them to ourselves. 2. No reformation is *swiving* but that which reacheth the heart. There is heart-wickedness that is defiling to the soul, from which we must wash ourselves by repentance and faith we must wash our hearts from the guilt we have contracted by spiritual wickedness, by those sins which begin and end in the heart, and go no farther; and by mortification and watchfulness we must suppress and prevent this heart-wickedness for the future. The tree must be made good, else the fruit will not. Jerusalem was all over-spread with the leprosy of sin; now as it is with the body in such a case, the physicians agree, that external application will do no good, unless a great deal of purging physic be taken inwardly to carry off the humours that lurk there, and to change the mass of the blood: so it is with the soul, so it is with the state, there will be no effectual reformation of the manners without a reformation of the mind; the mistakes there must be rectified, the corruptions there must be mortified, and the evil dispositions there changed. Though thou art Jerusalem, called an holy city, that will not save thee, unless thou wash thine heart from wickedness. In the latter part of the verse he reasons with them, *How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* Where he complains, (1.) Of the delays of their reformation; *How long shall that filthy heart of thine continue unwashed? When shall it once be?* Note, The God of heaven thinks the time long that his room is usurped, and his interest opposed in our souls, chap. xiii. 27. (2.) Of the root of their corruption; the vain thoughts that lodged within them, and defiled their hearts, from which they must wash their hearts. *Thoughts of iniquity, or mischief*, these are the evil thoughts that are the spawn of the evil heart, from which all other wickedness is produced, Matt. xv. 19. These are our own, the conceptions of our own lusts, Jam. i. 15. and they are most dangerous when they lodge within us, when they are admitted and entertained as guests, and are suffered to continue. Some read it *thoughts of affliction*, such thoughts as will bring nothing but affliction and misery upon thee. Some by the vain thoughts here understand all those frivolous pleas and excuses, with which they turned off the reproofs and calls of the word, and rendered them ineffectual, and bolstered themselves up in their wickedness. *Wash thy heart from wickedness*, and think not to say, *We are not polluted*, chap. ii. 23. or *We are Jerusalem, we have Abraham to our father*, Matt. iii. 8, 9.

19. ¶ My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace; because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. 20. Destruction upon destruction is cried: for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. 21. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? 22. For my people is foolish, they have not known me: they are foolish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. 23. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. 24. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. 25. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. 26. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger. 27. For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. 28. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken, it I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it. 29. The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein. 30. And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clovest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain thou shalt make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life. 31. For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her bringing forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murders.

The prophet is here in a mighty agony, and cries out like one upon the rack of pain with the colic or gripes, or some such acute distemper, or as a woman in travail. The expressions are very pathetic and moving, enough to melt a heart of stone into compassion, *My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my very heart*, and yet well, and in health himself, and nothing ails him. Note, A good man in such a bad world as this is cannot but be a man of sorrows. *My heart makes a noise in me*, through the tumult of my spirits, and

I cannot hold my peace. The grievance and the grief sometimes may be such, and that the most prudent, patient man cannot forbear complaining.

Now what is the matter? What is it that puts this good man into such a toils, it is not for himself, or any affliction in his family, that he grieves thus; but it is purely upon the public account, it is his people's case that he lays to heart thus.

2. They are very sinful, and will not be reformed, ver. 22. These are the words of God himself, for so the prophet chose to give this character of the people, rather than in his own word, or as from himself: *My people is foolish*. God calls them his people, though they are foolish. They have cast him off, but he has not cast them off, Rom. xi. 1. They are my people, whom I have been in covenant with, and still have mercy in store for. They are foolish, for they have not known me. Note, Those are foolish indeed, that have not known God; especially that call themselves his people, and have the advantage of coming into acquaintance with him, and yet have not known him. They are foolish children, stupid and senseless, and have no understanding. They cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; they do not understand what their true interest is, nor on which side it lies. They are wise to do evil, to plot mischief against the quiet in the land, wise to contrive the gratification of their lusts, and then to conceal and palliate it: But to do good they have no knowledge, no contrivance, no application of mind: they know not how to make a good use either of the ordinances, or of the providences of God, nor how to bring about any design for the good of their country. Contrary to this should be our character, Rom. xvi. 19. *I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil*.

2. They are very miserable, and cannot be relieved. He cries out thus *Because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, and seen the standard*, both giving the alarm of war, ver. 19—21. He doth not say *Thou hast heard*, O my ear, but *O my soul*, because the event was yet future, and it is by the spirit of prophecy that he sees it, and receives the impression of it. His soul heard it from the words of God, and therefore he was as well assured of it, and as much affected with it, as if he had heard it with his bodily ears. He expresseth this exceeding concern, (1.) To shew, that though he foretold this calamity, yet he was far from desiring the woeful day; for a woeful day it would be to him. It becomes us to tremble at the thoughts of the misery that sinners are running themselves into, though we have good hopes, through grace, that we ourselves are delivered from the wrath to come. (2.) To awaken them to a holy fear, and so to take care to prevent so great a judgment, by a true and timely repentance. Note, Those that would affect others with the word of God, should evidence that they are themselves affected with it.

Now let us see what there is in the destruction here foreseen and foretold, that is so very affecting.

1. It is a swift and sudden destruction; it comes upon Judah and Jerusalem ere they are aware, and pours in so fast upon them that they have not the least breathing time. They have no time to recollect their thoughts, much less to recruit or recover their strength; *Destruction upon destruction is cried*, ver. 20. *Breach upon breach*, one sad calamity, like Job's messengers, treading upon the heels of another. The death of Josiah breaks the ice; and plucks up the flood gates; within three months after that, his son and successor Jehoahaz is deposed by the king of Egypt; within two or three years after, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, and took it; and from thence-forward he was continually making descents upon the land of Judah with his armies during the reigns of Jehoiakim, Jeconiah and Zedekiah, till about nineteen years after he completed their ruin in the destruction of Jerusalem: but suddenly were their tents spoiled, and their curtains in a moment. Though the cities held out for some time, yet the country was laid waste at the very first; the shepherds and all that lived in tents were plundered presently, they and their effects fell into the enemies' hands; therefore we find the Rechabites that used to dwell in tents, upon the first coming of the army of the Chaldees, into the land, retiring to Jerusalem, Jer. xxxv. 11. The inhabitants of the villages soon ceased; suddenly were the tents spoiled. The plain men that dwelt in tents were first made a prey of.

2. This dreadful war continued a great while, not in the borders, but in the bowels of the country; for the people were very obstinate, and would not submit to, but took all opportunities to rebel against, the king of Babylon, which did but lengthen out the calamity; they might as good have yielded at first as at last. This is complained of, ver. 21. *How long shall I see the standard? Shall the sword devour for ever?* Good men are none of those that delight in war, for they know not how to fish in troubled waters, they are for peace, Plal. cxx. 7. and will heartily say amen to that prayer, Give peace in our time, O Lord. O thou sword of the Lord, when wilt thou be quiet?

3. The desolations made by it in the land were general and universal: The whole land is spoiled, or plundered, ver. 20. so it was at first, and at length it became a perfect chaos. It was such a desolation as amounted in a manner to a dissolution; not only the superstructure, but even the foundations were all out of course. The prophet in vision saw the extent and extremity of this destruction, and he here gives a most lively description of it, which one would think might have made those uneasy in their sins, who dwell in a land doomed to such a ruin, which might yet have been prevented by their repentance. (1.) The earth is without form and void, as it was Gen. i. 2. it is Tohu and Bohu, the words are used, as far as the land of Judah goes. It is confusion and emptiness, stripped of all its beauty, void of all its wealth, and compared with what it was, every thing out of place and out of shape. To a worse chaos than this will the earth be reduced at the end of time, when it and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. (2.) The heavens too are without light, as the earth without fruits. This alludes to the darkness that was upon the face of the deep, Gen. i. 2. and represents God's displeasure against them, as the eclipse of the sun did at our Saviour's death. It was not only the earth that failed them, but heaven also frowned upon them; and with their trouble they had darkness, for they could not see through their troubles. The smoke of their houses and cities which the enemy burnt, and the dust which their army raised in its march, even darkened the sun, so that the heavens had no light. Or it may be taken figuratively: The earth, i. e. the common people were impoverished, and in confusion; and the heavens, i. e. the princes and rulers, had no light, no wisdom in themselves, nor were of any comfort to the people, nor a guide to them. Compare Matt. xxiv. 29. (3.) The mountains trembled, and the hills moved lightly, ver. 24. so formidable were the appearances of God against his people, as in the days of old they had been for them, that the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs, Plal. cxiv. 4. The everlasting mountains seemed to be scattered, Hab. iii. 6. The mountains on which they had worshipped their idols, the mountains over which they had looked for succours, all trembled, as if they had been conscious of the people's guilt. The mountains, those among them that seemed to be highest and strongest, and of the firmest resolution, yet trembled at the approach of the Chaldean army. The hills moved lightly, as being eased of the burthen of a sinful nation, Isa. i. 24. (4.) Not the earth only, but the air was depopled, and left uninhabited, ver. 25. I beheld the cities, the countries that

used to be populous, and so there was no man to be seen; all the inhabitants were either killed, or fled, or taken captives; such a ruining, depopulating thing is sin: nay, even the birds of the heavens, that used to fly about and sing among the branches, were now fled away, and no more to be seen or heard. The land of Judah is now become like the lake of Sodom, over which (they say) no bird flies; see Deut. xxix. 23. The enemies shall make such havoc of the country, that they shall not so much as leave a bird alive in it. (5.) Both the ground and the houses shall be laid waste, ver. 26. Lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, being deserted by the inhabitants that should cultivate it, and then soon over-grown with thorns and briers: Or, being trodden down by the destroying army of the enemy, the cities also and their gates and walls are broken down, and levelled with the ground. Those that look no farther than second causes, impute it to the policy and fury of the invaders; but the prophet, who looked to the first cause, faith, it is at the presence of the Lord, at his face, i. e. the anger of his countenance, even by his fierce anger, that this was done. Even angry men cannot do us any real hurt, unless God be angry with us. If our ways please him, all is well. (6.) The meaning of all this is, that the nation shall be entirely ruined, and every part of it shall share in the destruction; neither town nor country shall escape. (1.) Not the country, for the whole land shall be desolate, corn-land and pasture-land, both common and inclosed; it shall all be laid waste, ver. 27. the conquerors will have occasion for it all. (2.) Not the men, for, ver. 29. the whole city shall flee, all the inhabitants of the town shall quit their habitations by consent, for fear of the horsemen and bow-men, rather than lie exposed to their fury, they shall go into the thickets, where they are in danger to be torn by briers, nay, to be torn in pieces by wild beasts; and they shall climb up upon the rocks, where their lodging will be hard and cold, and the precipice dangerous. Let us not be over-sord of our houses and cities; for the time may come, when rocks and thickets may be preferable, and chosen rather. This shall be the common case, for every city shall be forsaken, and not a man shall be left, that dares dwell therein. Both government and trade shall be at an end, and all civil societies and incorporations dissolved. It is a very dismal idea which this gives of the approaching desolation, but in the midst of all these threatenings comes in one comfortable word, ver. 27. Yet will not I make a full end; not a total consumption, for God will reserve a remnant to himself, that shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger; not a final consumption, for Jerusalem shall again be built, and the land inhabited. This comes in here, in the midst of the threatenings, for the comfort of those that trembled at God's word; and it speaks to us the changeableness of God's providence, as it breaks down, so it raiseth up again; every end of our comforts is not a full end, however we may be ready to think it so; and it speaks the unchangeableness of God's covenant, which stands so firm, that though he may correct his people very severely, yet he will not cast them off, chap. xxx. 11.

3. Their case was helpless, and without remedy. 1. God would not help them; so he tells them plainly, ver. 28. and if the Lord do not help them, who can? This is that which makes their case deplorable; for this the earth mourns, and the heavens above are black; there are no prospects but what are very dismal, because I have spoken it, I have given the word which shall not be called back, I have purposed it, it is a consumption decreed, determined, and I will not repent, nor change this way, but proceed in it, and will not turn back from it. They would not repent and turn back from the way of their sins, chap. ii. 25. and therefore God will not repent and turn back from the way of his judgments.

2. They could not help themselves, ver. 30, 31. When the thing appeared at a distance, they flattered themselves with hopes, that though God should not appear for them as he had done for Hezekiah against the Assyrian army, yet they should find some means or other to secure themselves, and give a check to the forces of the enemy. But the prophet tells them, that when it comes to the setting to, they will be quite at a loss. When thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? what course wilt thou take? Sit down now and consider this in time. He assures them, that whatever were now their contrivances and confidences,

1. They will then be despised by their allies whom they depended upon for assistance. He had often compared the sin of Jerusalem to whoredom, not only her idolatry, but her trust in creatures, in the neighbouring powers. Now here he compares her to a harlot, abandoned by all the lewd ones that used to make court to her. She is supposed to do all she can to keep up her interest in their affections; she doth what she can to make herself appear considerable among the nations, and a valuable ally; compliments them by her ambassadors to the highest degree, to engage them to stand by her now in her distress: she clothes herself with crimson, as if she were rich, and decks herself with ornaments of gold, as if her treasures were still as full as ever they had been; she rents her face with painting, puts the best colours she can upon her present distresses, and doth her utmost to palliate and extenuate her losses, sets a good face upon it. But this painting, though it beautifies the face for the present, really rents it; the frequent use of paint spoils the skin, cracks it and makes it rough; so the case which by false colours has been made to appear better than really it was, when truth comes to light, will look to much the worse; and after all, in vain shall thou thy make thyself fair; all thy neighbours are sensible how low thou art brought; the Chaldeans will strip thee of thy crimson and ornaments, and then thy confederates will not only fight thee, and refuse to give thee any succour, but they will join with those that seek thy life, that they may come in for a share in the prey of so rich a country. Here seems to be an allusion to the story of Jezebel, who thought by making herself look fair and fine, to have out-faced her doom, but in vain, 2 Kings ix. 30—33. See what creatures prove when we confide in them, how treacherous they are; instead of saving the life, they seek the life; they often change, so as that they will sooner do us an ill turn, than any service: and see to how little purpose it is for those that have by sin deformed themselves in God's eyes, to think by any arts they can use to beautify themselves in the eye of the world.

2. They will then be themselves in despair; will find their troubles to be like the pains of a woman in travail, which she cannot escape. I have heard the voice of the daughter of Zion; her groans echoing to the triumphant shouts of the Chaldean army, which he heard, ver. 15. it is like the voice of a woman in travail, whose pain is exquisite, and the fruit of sin and the curse too, Gen. iii. 16. and extorts lamentable out-cries, especially of a woman in travail of her first child, who having never known before what that pain is, is the more terrified by it. Troubles are most grievous to those that have not been used to them: Zion in this distress, since her neighbours refuse to pity her, bewaileth herself, fetching deep sighs, so the word signifies, and she spreads her hands, either wringing them for grief, or reaching them forth for succour. And all the cry is, Woe is me now, now the decree is gone forth against her, and is past recall, for my soul is wearied because of murderers; the Chaldean soldiers put all to the sword that gave them any opposition, so that the land was full of murders. Zion was weary of hearing tragical stories from all parts of the country, and cried out, Woe is me. It was well if their sufferings put them in the mind of their sins, the murders committed upon them, of the murders committed by them; for God was

now making inquisition for the innocent blood shed in Jerusalem, which the Lord would not pardon, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. Note, As sin will find out the sinner, so sorrow will sooner or later find out the secure.

C H A P. V.

Reproofs for sin and threatenings of judgments are intermixed in this chapter, and are set the one over against the other; judgments are threatened that the reproofs of sin might be the more effectual to bring them to repentance; sin is discovered, that God might be justified in the judgments threatened. (1.) The sins they are charged with, are very great injustice, ver. 1. Hypocrisy in religion, ver. 2. Incurri- bleness, ver. 3. Both poor and rich corrupted and debauched, ver. 4, 5. Idolatry and adultery, ver. 7, 8. Treacherous departures from God, ver. 11. And an impudent defiance of him, ver. 12, 13. And that which is at the bottom of all, the want of the fear of God, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to fear him, ver. 20, 24. And in the close of the chapter, they are charged with violence and oppression, ver. 26—28. And a combination of those to debauch the nation, that should have been active to reform it, ver. 30, 31. (2.) The judgments they are threatened with are very terrible: In general they shall be reckoned with, ver. 9—29. A foreign enemy shall be brought in upon them, ver. 15—17. Shall set guards upon them, ver. 6. Shall destroy their fortifications, ver. 10. Shall carry them away into captivity, ver. 19. And keep all good things from them, ver. 25. And herein is the words of God's prophets shall be fulfilled, ver. 14. But, (3.) Here is an intimation twice given that God would in the midst of wrath remember mercy, and not utterly destroy them, ver. 10—18. This was the scope and purport of Jeremiah's preaching in the latter end of Josiah's reign, and the beginning of Jehoiakim's, but the success of it did not answer expectation.

1. **R**UN ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. 2. And though they say, The LORD liveth, surely they swear falsely. 3. O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. 4. Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, nor the judgment of their God. 5. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. 6. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evening shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities; every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces; because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased. 7. How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods; when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlot's houses. 8. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. 9. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

Here is, 1. A challenge to produce any old right honest man, or at least any considerable number of such in Jerusalem, ver. 1. Jerusalem was become like the old world, in which all flesh had corrupted their way. There were some perhaps who flattered themselves with hopes that there were yet many good men in Jerusalem, that would stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God: And others that boasted of its being the holy city, and thought that would save it: but God bids them search the town, and they should scarce find a man in it that executeth judgment, and makes conscience of what he saith and doth. Look in the streets where they made their appearance, and conversed together, and in the broad places where they kept their markets: see if you can find a man, i. e. a magistrate (so some) that executeth judgment, and administers judgment impartially, that will put the laws in execution against vice and profaneness. When the faithful thus cease and fail, it is time to cry, Woe is me, Micah vii. 1, 2. high time to cry, Help, Lord, Psalm xii. 1. Or if there be here and there a man that is truly conscientious, and doth at least seek the truth, yet you shall not find him in the streets and broad places, he dares not appear publicly, for he shall be abused and run down; Truth is fallen in the street, Isa. lix. 14. and is forced to seek for corners. So pleasing would it be to God to find any such, that for their sake he would pardon the city; if there were but ten righteous men in Sodom, if but one of a thousand, of ten thousand in Jerusalem, is should be spared. See how ready God is to forgive, how swift to shew mercy.

But it might be said, What do you make of those in Jerusalem that continue to make profession of religion and relation to God? are not those men for whose sakes Jerusalem must be spared? No; for they are not sincere in their profession, ver. 2. They said the Lord liveth, and will swear by his name only, but they swear falsely, i. e. (1.) They are not sincere in the profession they make of respect to God, but are false to him; they honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. (2.) Though they appeal to God only, they make no conscience of calling him to witness to a lie: though they do not swear by idols, they forswear themselves, which is no less an affront to God, as the God of truth, than the other is as the only true God.

2. A complaint which the prophet makes to God of the obstinacy and wilfulness of these people. God had appealed to their eyes, ver. 1. but here the prophet appeals to his eyes, ver. 3. Are not thine eyes upon the truth? Dost thou not see every man's true character? and is not this the truth of their

their character, that they have made their faces harder than a rock? Or, Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, but where is it to be found among the men of this generation? For though they say, *The Lord liveth*, yet they never regard him; thou hast stricken them with one affliction after another, but they have not grieved for the affliction, they have been as flocks and stones under it, much less have they grieved for the sin, by which they have brought it upon themselves. Thou hast gone farther yet, *hast consumed them*, hast corrected them yet more severely, but they have refused to receive correction; to accommodate themselves to thy design in correcting them, and to answer it: They would not receive instruction by the correction: they have set themselves to out-face the divine sentence, and to out-brave the execution of it, for they have made their faces harder than a rock; they cannot change countenance, neither blush for shame, nor look pale for fear; cannot be beaten back from the pursuit of their lusts, whatever check is given them; for, though often called to it, they have refused to return, and would go forward, right or wrong, as the horse into battle.

3. The trial made both of rich and poor, and the ill character given of both.

(1.) The poor were ignorant, and therefore they were wicked. He found many that refused to return; for whom he was willing to make the best excuse their case would bear, and it was this, *ver. 4. Surely, these are poor, they are foolish*; they never had the advantage of a good education, nor have they wherewithal to help themselves now with the means of instruction: they are forced to work hard for their living, and have no time or capacity for reading or hearing, so that they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgments of their God; they understand neither the way in which God by his precept will have them to walk towards him, nor the way in which he by his providence is walking towards them. Note, 1. Prevailing ignorance is the lamentable cause of abounding impiety and iniquity. What can one expect but works of darkness from brutish, sottish people, that know nothing of God and religion, but choose to sit in darkness? 2. This is commonly a reigning sin among poor people: There are the devil's poor, as well as God's; who, notwithstanding their poverty, might know the way of the Lord, so as to walk in it, and do their duty, without being book-learned; but they are willingly ignorant, and therefore their ignorance will not be their excuse.

(2.) The rich were insolent and haughty, and therefore they were wicked; *ver. 5. I will get me to the great men*, and see if I can find them more pliable to the word and providence of God; I will speak to them, preach at court, in hopes to make some impression upon men of polite literature; but all in vain, for though they know the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God, yet they are too stiff to stoop to his government; they have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bands: they know their master's will, but are resolved to have their own will, to walk in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes. They think themselves too goodly to be controlled, too big to be corrected, even by the sovereign Lord of all himself. They are for breaking even his bands in sunder, Psalm ii. 3. The poor are weak, the rich are wilful, and so neither do their duty.

2. Some particular sins instanced in which they were most notoriously guilty of, and which cried most loudly to heaven for vengeance. Their transgressions indeed were many, of many kinds, and often repeated, and their backslidings were increased; they added to the number of them, and grew more and more impudent in them, *ver. 6.* But two sins especially were justly to be looked upon as unpardonable crimes. (1.) Their spiritual whoredom; giving that honour to idols which is due to God only; *thy children have forsaken me*, to whom they were born and dedicated, and under whom they have been brought up, and they have sworn by them that are no gods, have made their appeals to them as if they had been omniscient, and their proper judges. This is here put for all acts of religious worship due to God only, but with which they had honoured their idols. They have sworn to them, so it may be read; have joined themselves to them, and covenanted with them. They that forsake God, make an ill change for those that are no gods.

(2.) Their corporal whoredom; because they had forsaken God, and served idols, he gave them up to vile affections; and they that dishonoured him were left to dishonour themselves and their own families: They committed adultery most scandalously, without sense of shame or fear of punishment; for they assembled themselves by troops in harlots' houses, and did not blush to be seen by one another in the most scandalous places. So impudent and violent was their lust, so impatient of check, and so eager to be gratified, that they became perfect beasts, *ver. 8.* like stone-horses, high-fed, they neighed every one after his neighbour's wife, *ver. 8.* Unbridled lusts make men like natural brute beasts, such monstrous, odious things are they. And that which aggravated their sin was, that it was the abuse of God's favours to them; when they were fed to the full, then their lusts grew thus furious: *Fulness of bread was fuel to the fire of Sodom's lusts.* *Sine Cerere & Baccho friget Venus.* Fastings would help to tame the unruly evil that is so full of deadly poison, and bringing the body into subjection.

4. A threatening of God's wrath against them for their wickedness and the universal debauchery of their land.

1. The particular judgments that are threatened, *ver. 6.* A foreign enemy shall break in upon them, and get dominion over them, and shall lay all waste: their country shall be as if it were over-run, and perfectly mastered by wild beasts. This enemy shall be, (1.) Like a lion of the forest, so strong, so furious, so irresistible; and he shall slay them. Like a wolf of the evening, that comes out at night when he is hungry to seek his prey, and is very fierce and ravenous; and the noise both of the lions roaring and the wolves howling, is very hideous. (3.) Like a leopard that is very swift and very cruel, and withal careful not to miss his prey. The army of the enemy shall watch over their cities so strictly, as to put the inhabitants to this sad dilemma, if they stay in they are starved, if they stir out they are subdued; every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces; which intimates, that in many places the enemy gave no quarter: and all this bloody work owing to the multitude of their transgressions. It is sin that makes the great slaughter.

2. An appeal to themselves concerning the equity of it, *ver. 9. Shall I not visit for these things?* Can you yourselves think that the God whose name is Jealous will let such idolatries go unpunished? or that a God of infinite purity will connive on such abominable uncleanness? These are things that must be reckoned for, else the honour of God's government cannot be maintained, nor his laws saved from contempt; but sinners will be tempted to think him altogether such a one as themselves; contrary to that conviction of their own consciences concerning the judgment of God, which it is necessary should be supported, that they which do such things are worthy of death, Rom. i. 32. Observe, When God punisheth sin, he is said to visit for it, or enquire into it; for he weighs the cause before he passeth sentence. Sinners have reason to expect punishment upon the account of God's holiness, to which sin is highly offensive, as well as upon the account of his justice, to which it renders us obnoxious, which is intimated in that, *Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* It is not only the word of God; but his soul that takes vengeance: and he has national judgments wherewith to take vengeance for national sins. Such nations as this was cannot long go unpunished. How shall I pardon thee for this? *ver. 7.* Not

but that those who have been guilty of these sins have found mercy with God, as to their eternal state, Manasse himself did, though so much accessory to the iniquity of these times; but nations as such being only rewardable and punishable in this life, it would not be for the glory of God to let a nation so very wicked as this pass without some manifest tokens of his displeasure.

10. ¶ Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the LORD's. 11. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD. 12. They have belied the LORD, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine: 13. And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. 14. Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them. 15. Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. 16. Their quiver is an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. 17. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig-trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword. 18. Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you. 19. And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these things unto us? then shall thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.

We may observe in these verses as before,

1. The sin of this people upon which the commission signed against them is grounded. God disowns them, and dooms them to destruction, *ver. 10.* But is there not a cause? yes: For, (1.) They have deserted the law of God, *ver. 11.* The house of Israel and the house of Judah, though at variance with one another, yet both agreed to deal very treacherously against God. They forsook the worship of him, and therein violated their covenants with him: they revolted from him, and played the hypocrites with him. (2.) They have defied the judgments of God, and given the lie to his threatenings in the mouth of his prophets, *ver. 12, 13.* They are often told that evil would certainly come upon them; they must expect some desolating judgment, sword or famine; but they were secure, and said, *We shall have peace though we go on.* For, 1. They did not fear what God is; they belied him, and confronted the dictates even of natural light concerning him; for they said, *It is not he*, i. e. he is not such a one as we have been made to believe he is; he doth not see, or not regard, or will not requite it. And therefore no evil shall come upon us. Multitudes are ruined by this, they are made to believe that God will not be so strict with them as his word saith he will; nay, by this artifice Satan undid us all, *ye shall not surely die*; ye shall not see sword or famine; vain hopes of impunity are the deceitful support of all impiety. (2.) They did not fear what God said. The prophets gave them fair warning, but they turned it off with a jest; they do but talk so, because it is their trade; they are words of course, and words are but wind. It is not the word of the Lord that is in them; it is only the language of their melancholy fancy, or their ill-will to their country, because they are not preferred. Note, Impenitent sinners are not willing to own any thing to be the word of God that makes against them; that tends either to part them from, or disquiet them in their sins. They threaten the prophets, *they shall become wind*, shall pass away unregarded, and thus shall it be done unto them, what they threaten against us we will inflict upon them: Do they frighten us with famine? let them be fed with the bread of affliction: so Micajah was, 1 Kings xxii. 27. Do they tell us of the sword? let them perish by the sword, chap. ii. 30. Thus their mocking and misusing God's messengers, filled the measure of their iniquity.

2. The punishment of this people for their sin.

1. The threatenings they laughed at shall be executed, *ver. 14.* Because ye speak this word of contempt concerning the prophets, and the word in their mouths, therefore God will put honour upon them and their words, for not one iota or tittle of them shall fall to the ground, 1 Sam. iii. 19. Here God turns to the prophet Jeremiah, who had been thus bantered, and perhaps had been a little uneasy at it; Behold, I will make thy words in thy mouth fire. God owns them for his words, though men denied them, and will as surely make them take effect, as the fire consumes combustible matter that is in its way. The word shall be fire, and the people wood. Sinners by sin make themselves fuel to that wrath of God, which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men in the scripture. The word of God will certainly be too hard for those that contend with it. They shall break, that will not bow before it.

2. The enemy they thought themselves in no danger of, shall be brought upon them. God gives them their commission, *ver. 10.* Go ye up upon her walls, mount them, trample upon them, tread them down; walls of stone before the divine commission shall be but mud walls. Having made yourselves masters of the walls, you may destroy at pleasure, you may take away her battlements, and leave the fenced, fortified cities to lie open; for her battlements are not the Lord's, he doth not own them, and therefore will not protect and fortify them. They were not erected in his fear, nor with a dependance upon him: the people have trusted to them more than to God; and therefore they are not his; when the city is filled with sin, God will not patronize the fortifications of it, and then they are paper walls: What can defend us, when he who is our defence, and the defender of all our defences, is departed from us? Numb. xiv. 9. What is not of God cannot stand, nor stand long, nor stand us in any stead.

What dreadful work these invaders should make is here described, *ver. 15.* Lo, I will bring a nation upon you, O house of Israel. Note, God has all nation at his command, doth what he pleaseth with them, and makes what use

use he pleaseth of them. And sometimes he is pleased to make the nations of the earth, the heathen nations, a scourge to the house of Israel, when that is become an *hypocritical nation*. This nation of the Chaldeans is here said to be a remote nation, it is brought upon them from afar, and therefore will make the greater spoil, and the longer stay, that they may pay themselves well for so long a march; a nation that thou hast had no commerce with by reason of their distance, and therefore canst not expect to find favour with. God can bring trouble upon us from places and causes very remote. It is a mighty nation, that there is no making head against: an ancient nation, that value themselves upon their antiquity, and will therefore be the more haughty and imperious. It is a nation whose language thou knowest not; they spoke the Syrian tongue, which the Jews at that time were not acquainted with, as appears, 2 Kings xviii. 26. The difference of language would make it the more difficult to treat with them of peace, compare this with the threatenings, Deut. xviii. 49, which it seems to have a reference to, for the law and the prophets exactly agree. They are well armed. *Their quiver is as an open sepulchre*, i. e. their arrows shall fly so thick, hit so sure, and wound so deep, that they shall be reckoned to breathe nothing but death and slaughter: they are able-bodied, all effective mighty men, ver. 16. And when they have made themselves masters of the country, they shall devour all before them, and reckon all their own that they can lay their hands on, ver. 17. (1.) They shall strip the country, shall not only *sustain* but *surgeil* their soldiers with the rich products of this fruitful land. They shall not store up (then it might possibly have been retrieved) but *cut up thine harvest in the field, and thy bread in the house which thy sons and thy daughters shall eat*. Note, What we have, we have for our families, and it is a comfort to see our sons and daughters eating that which we have taken care and pains for. But a grievous vexation to see it devoured by strangers and enemies, to see their camps victualled with our stores, while those that are dear to us are perishing for want of it: this also is according to the curse of the law, Deut. xxviii. 53. They shall *cut up thy flocks and thy herds*, out of which thou hast taken sacrifices for thine idols; they shall not leave thee the fruit of thy vines and fig-trees. 2. They shall starve the towns, they shall impoverish my fenced cities (and what fence against poverty when it comes like an armed man? (those cities wherein thou trustest to be a protection to the country. Note, It is just with God to impoverish that which we make our confidence. They shall impoverish them with the sword, cutting off all provisions from coming to them, and intercepting trade and commerce, which will impoverish even fenced cities.

3. An intimation of the tender compassion God has yet for them: the enemy is commissioned to *destroy and lay waste*, but must not *make a full end*, ver. 10. Though they make a great slaughter, yet some must be left to live; and a great spoil, yet something must be left to live upon, for God hath said it, ver. 18. with a *non obstante* to the present desolation, even in those days, as dismal as they are, *I will not make a full end with you*: as if God will not, the enemy shall not. God has mercy in store for his people, and therefore will set bounds to this desolating judgment, *Hitherto it shall come and no further*.

4. The justification of God in these proceedings against them: as he will appear to be *gracious* in not making a full end with them, so he will appear to be *righteous* in coming so near it, and will have it acknowledged, that he has done them no wrong, ver. 19. Observe, (1.) A reason demanded, info-
lently demanded by the people for these judgments. They will say, *wherefore doth the Lord our God do all this unto us*: What provocation have we given him, or what quarrel has he with us? as if against such a sinful nation there did not appear cause enough of action. Note, Unhumbled hearts are ready to charge God with injustice in their afflictions, and pretend they are to seek for the cause of them, when it is written in the forehead of them. But, (2.) Here is reason presently assigned: the prophet is instructed what answer to give them, for God will be justified when he speaks, though he speaks with never so much terror. He must tell them that God doth this against them for what they have done against him, and they may, if they please, read their sin in their punishment. Do not they know very well that they have forsaken God, and therefore can they think it strange if he has forsaken them? Have they forgot how often they served strange gods in their own land, that good land, in the abundance of the fruits of which they ought to have served God with gladness of heart, and therefore is it not just with God to make them serve strangers in a strange land, where they can call nothing their own, as he had threatened to do? Deut. xviii. 47, 48. They that are fond of strangers, to strangers let them go.

20. Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, 21. Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not: 22. Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? 23. But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. 24. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

The prophet having reproved them for sin, and threatened the judgments of God against them, is here sent to them again upon another errand, which he must publish in Judah: The purport of it is to persuade them to fear God, which would be an effectual principle of their reformation, as the want of that fear had been at the bottom of their apostasy.

1. He complains of the shameful stupidity of this people, and their bent to backslide from God: speaking as if he knew not what course to take with them. For,

(1.) Their understandings were darkened, and unapt to admit the rays of the divine light. They are a foolish people and without understanding, they apprehend not the mind of God, though never so plainly discovered to them, by the written word, by his prophets, and by his providence, ver. 21. They have eyes but they see not, ears but they hear not, like the idols which they made and worshipped. Psal. cxv. 5, 6—8. One would have thought they took notice of things, but really they did not; they had intellectual faculties, but they did not employ and improve them as they ought. Herein they disappointed the expectations of all their neighbours, who, observing what excellent means of knowledge they had, concluded, Surely they are a wise and understanding people, Deut. iv. 6. and yet really they are a foolish people, and without understanding. Note, We cannot judge of men by the advantages and opportunities they enjoy; there are those that sit in darkness

in a land of light, and live in sin even in a holy land; that are bad in the best places.

(2.) Their wills were stubborn and unapt to submit to the rules of the divine law, ver. 23. This people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart, and no wonder when they were foolish and without understanding, Psal. lxxii. 5. Nay, it is the corrupt bias of the will that bribes and befools the understanding: none so blind as those that will not see. The character of this people is the true character of all people by nature, till the grace of God has wrought a change; we are foolish, slow of understanding, and apt to mistake and forget; yet that is not the worst, we have a revolting and rebellious heart; a carnal mind, that is enmity against God, and is not in subjection to his law; not only revolting from him by a rooted aversion to that which is good, but rebellious against him by a strong inclination to that which is evil. Observe, The revolting heart is a rebellious one: they that withdraw from their allegiance to God stick not there, but by siding in with sin and Satan take up arms against him. They are revolted and gone. The revolting heart will produce a revolting life; they are gone, and they will go; so it may be read, now nothing will be restrained from them, Gen. xi. 6.

2. He describes this to the want of the fear of God. When he observes them to be without understanding, he asks, *Fear ye not me, saith the Lord, and will ye not tremble at my presence?* ver. 22. If you would but keep up an awe of God, you would be more observant of what he saith to you: and did you but understand yourselves better, you would be more under the commanding rule of God's fear. When he observes that they are revolted and gone, he adds this as the root and cause of their apostasy, ver. 24. *Neither say they in their hearts, Let us now fear the Lord our God*. Therefore so many bad thoughts come into their minds, and hurry them to that which is evil, because they will not admit and entertain good thoughts; and particularly not this good thought, *let us now fear the Lord our God*. It is true, it is God's work to put his fear into our hearts, but it is our work to stir up ourselves to fear him, and to fasten upon those considerations which are proper to affect us with a holy awe of him; and it is because we do not do this that our hearts are so destitute of his fear as they are, and so apt to revolt and rebel.

3. He suggests some of those things which are proper to possess us with a holy fear of God.

1. We must fear the Lord and his greatness, ver. 22. upon this account he demands our fear? *Shall we not tremble at his presence*, and be afraid of affronting him or trifling with him, who in the kingdom of nature and providence gives such incontestible proofs of his Almighty power and sovereign dominion? Here is one instance given of very many that might be given: he keeps the sea within compass: though the tides flow with a mighty strength twice every day, and if they should flow on a while would drown the world: though in a storm the billows rise high, and dash to the shore with incredible force and fury, yet they are under check, they return, they retire, and no harm is done. This is the Lord's doing, and it would be marvellous if it were not common in our eyes. He has placed the sand for the bound of the sea, not only for a meer stone to mark out how far it may come, and where it must stop, but as a mound or fence to put a stop to it. A wall of sand shall be as effectual as a wall of brass to check the flowing waves, when God is pleased to make it so; nay, that is chosen rather, to teach us that a soft answer, like the soft sand turns away wrath, and quiets a foaming rage, when grievous words, like hard rocks, do but exasperate, and make the waters cast forth so much the more mire and dirt. This bound is placed by a perpetual decree; by an ordinance of antiquity, so some read it, and then it sends us as far back as to the creation of the world, when God divided between the sea and the dry land, and fixed marches between them, Gen. i. 9, 10. which is elegantly described, Psal. civ. 6, &c. and Job xxxviii. 3, &c. or to the period of Noah's flood, when God promised that he would never drown the world again, Gen. ix. 11. An ordinance of perpetuity, so our translation takes it: it is a perpetual decree, it has had its effect all along to this day, and shall still continue till day and night come to an end. This perpetual decree the waters of the sea cannot pass over, or break through. Though the ways thereof toss themselves, as the troubled sea doth when it cannot rest, yet can they not prevail; though they roar and rage, as if they were vexed at the check given him, yet can they not pass over. Now this is a good reason why we should fear God. For, (1.) By this we see that he is a God of almighty power and universal sovereignty, and therefore to be feared and had in reverence. (2.) This shews us how easily he could drown the world again, and how much we continually lie at his mercy, and therefore we should be afraid of making him our enemy. (3.) Even the untidy waves of the sea observe his decree, and retreat at his check, and shall not we then? Why are our hearts revolting and rebellious, when the sea neither revolts nor rebels?

2. We must fear the Lord and his goodness, Hos. iii. 5. The instances of this, as of the former, are fetched from God's common providence, ver. 24. we must fear the Lord our God, i. e. we must worship him and give him glory, and be always in care to keep ourselves in his love, because he is continually doing us good; he gives us both the former and the latter rain; the former a little after seed-time, the latter a little before harvest, and both in their season; and by this means he reserves to us the appointed weeks of harvest. Harvest is reckoned by weeks, because in a few weeks enough is gathered to serve for sustenance the year round. The weeks of the harvest are appointed us by the promise of God, that seed-time and harvest shall not fail. And in performance of that promise they are referred to us by the divine providence, otherwise we should come short of them. In harvest mercies therefore God is to be acknowledged, his power and goodness, and faithfulness, for they all come from him. And it is a good reason why we should fear him, that we may keep ourselves in his love, because we have such a necessary dependence upon him. The fruitful seasons were witnesses for God even to the heathen world, sufficient to leave them inexcusable in their contempt of him, Acts xiv. 17. and yet the Jews, who had the written word to explain their testimony by, were not wrought upon to fear the Lord though it appears how much it is our interest to do so.

25. ¶ Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have witholden good things from you. 26. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares: they set a trap, they catch men. 27. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great and waxen rich. 28. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper: and the right of the needy do they not judge. 29. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? 30. A wonderful and horrible thing

is committed in the land; 31. The prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Here 1. The prophet shews them what mischief their sins had done them; they have *turned away these things*, ver. 25. viz. the *former and the latter rain*, which they used to have in due season, ver. 24. but had of late been withheld, chap. iii. 3. by reason of which the appointed weeks of harvest had sometimes disappointed them. It is your sin that has withheld good from you, when God was ready to bestow it upon you. Note, It is sin that stops the current of God's favour to us, and deprives us of the blessings we used to receive. It is that that makes the heavens as brass and the earth as iron.

2. He shews them how great their sins were, how heinous, and very provoking. When they had forsaken the worship of the true God, even moral honesty was lost among them: *Among my people are found wicked men*, ver. 26. some of the worst of men, and so much the worse they were, in that they were found among God's people.

(1.) They were spiteful and malicious. Such are properly *wicked men*, men that delight in doing mischief; they were found i. e. caught in the very act of their wickedness. As hunters or fowlers lay snares for their game, so did they lie in wait to catch men; and made a sport of it, and took as much pleasure in it, as if they had been entrapping beasts or birds. They contrived ways of doing mischief to good people, whom they hated for their goodness, especially to those that faithfully reproved them, *Ist.* xxix. 21. or to those that stood in the way of their preferment, or that they apprehended had affronted them, or done them a diskindness; or to those whose estates they coveted; so Jezebel ensnared Naboth for his vineyard. Nay, they did mischief for mischief sake.

(2.) They were false and treacherous, ver. 27. *As a cage or coop, is full of birds*, and of food for them to fatten them for the table, so are their houses full of deceit, i. e. of wealth gotten by fraudulent practices, or of arts and methods of defrauding. All the business of their families is done with deceit; whoever deals with them, they will cheat them if they can; which is easily done by those, who make no conscience of what they say and do. *Hence in they overpass the deeds of the wicked*, ver. 28. Those that act by deceit, with a colour of law and justice, do more mischief perhaps than those wicked men, ver. 26. that carried all before them by open force and violence. Or, they are worse than the heathen themselves, yea, the worst of them. And could you think it; they prosper in these wicked courses, and therefore their hearts are hardened in them. They are greedy of the world, because they find it flows in upon them, and they stick not at any wickedness in pursuit of it, because they find it is so far from hindering their prosperity, that it furthers it. They are become great in the world, they are *waxen rich*, and thrive upon it. They have wherewithal to make provision for the flesh to fulfill all the lusts of it, to which they are very indulgent, so that they are *waxen fat* with living at ease, and bathing themselves in all the delights of sense: they are sleek and smooth, and shine; they look fair and gay, and every body admires them. And they pass by matters of evil, so some read the following words, i. e. they escape the evil which one would expect their sins should bring upon them; *They are not in trouble as other men*, much less as ill men. *Psal.* lxxii. 5, &c.

(3.) When they were grown great; and had got power in their hands, they did not do that good with it which they ought to have done. *They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, and the right of the needy*. The fatherless are often needy, always need assistance and advice, and advantage is taken of their helpless condition to do them an injury: Who should succour them then but the great and rich? What have men wealth for, but to do good with it? But these would take no cognisance of any such distressed cases: they had not so much sense of justice, nor compassion for the injured; or, if they did concern themselves in the cause, it was not to do right, but to protect them that did wrong. And yet they prosper still, *God layeth not folly to them*. Certainly then the things of this world are not the best things, for oftentimes the worst men have the most of them; yet we are not to think, that because they prosper God allows of their practices. No, though sentence against their evil works be not executed speedily, it will be executed.

(4.) There was a general corruption of all orders and degrees of men among them, ver. 30, 31. *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land*. The degeneracy of such a people, so privileged and advanced, was a wonderful thing, and to be admired! How could they ever break through so many obligations? It was a horrible thing, and to be detested, and the consequences of it dreaded. To frighten ourselves from sin, let us call it a horrible thing; why, what was the matter? In short, this: 1. The leaders misled the people; the prophets prophecy falsely, counterfeited a commission from heaven, when they were factors for hell. Religion is never more dangerously attacked, than under colour and pretence of divine revelation. But why did not the priests, who had power in their hands for that purpose, restrain these false prophets? Alas! instead of doing that, they made use of them as the tools of their ambition and tyranny; they bear rule by their means; they supported themselves in their grandeur and wealth, their laziness and luxury, their impositions, and oppressions, by the help of the false prophets, and their interest in the people. Thus they were in a combination against every thing that was good, and strengthened one another's hands in evil. 2. The people were well enough pleased to be so misled: They are my people, saith God, and should have stood up for me, and born their testimony against the wickedness of their priests and prophets; but they love to have it so. If the priests and prophets will let them alone in their sins, they will give them no disturbance in their's. They love to be ridden with a loose rein, and like those rulers very well, that will not restrain their lusts, and those teachers that will not reprove them.

2. He shews them how fatal the consequences of this would certainly be. Let them consider.

1. What the reckoning would be for their wickedness, ver. 29. *Shall I not visit for these things?* as before, ver. 9. Sometimes mercy rejoiceth against judgment; *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* Here judgment is reasoning against mercy, *Shall I not visit?* We are sure infinite wisdom knows how to accommodate the matter between them. The manner of expression is very emphatical, and speaks, (1.) The certainty and necessity of God's judgments: *Shall not my soul be avenged?* Yes, without doubt, vengeance will come, it must come, if the sinner repents not. (2.) The justice and equity of God's judgments; he appeals to the sinners own conscience; do not they deserve to be punished, that have been guilty of such abominations? Shall he not be avenged on such a nation, such a wicked, provoking nation as this?

2. What the direct tendency of their wickedness was; *What will ye do in the end thereof?* That is, (1.) What a pitch of wickedness will you come to at last? what will you do; what will you not do that is base and wicked?

What will this grow to? You will certainly grow worse and worse, till you have filled up the measure of your iniquity. (2.) What a pit of destruction will you come to at last? When things are brought to such a pass as this, as nothing can be expected from you but a deluge of sin, so nothing can be expected from God but a deluge of wrath, and what will ye do when that comes? Note, those that walk in ill ways, would do well to consider the tendency of them both to greater sin and utter ruin. *An end will come*, the end of a wicked life will come, when it will be all called over again, and without doubt will be bitterness in the latter end.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter, as before, we have, (1.) A prophecy of the invading of the land of Judah, and the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, ver. 1.—6. with the spoils they should make of the country, ver. 9. and the terror which all shall be seized with on that occasion, ver. 22—28. (2.) An account of those sins of Judah and Jerusalem, which provoked God to bring this desolating judgment upon them. Their oppressions, ver. 7. Their contempt of the word of God, ver. 10.—12. Their worldliness, ver. 13. The treachery of their prophets, ver. 14. Their impudence in sin, ver. 15. Their obstinacy against reproofs, ver. 18, 19. Which made their sacrifice unacceptable to him ver. 20, and for which he gave them up to ruin, ver. 21. But tried them first, ver. 27. And then rejected them as irreclaimable, ver. 28—30. (3.) Good counsel given them in the midst of all this, but in vain ver. 8—16, 17.

1. O Ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction. 2. I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman. 3. The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her: they shall pitch their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place. 4. Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out. 5. Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces. 6. ¶ For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem; this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppressed in the midst of her. 7. As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds. 8. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

Here is, 1. Judgment threatened against Judah and Jerusalem; that city, that country were at this time secure, and under no apprehension of danger; they saw no cloud gathering, but every thing looked safe and serene: but the prophet tells them they should shortly be invaded by a foreign power, an army shall be brought against them from the north, which should lay all waste, and should cause not only a general consternation, but a general desolation. It is here foretold,

1. That the alarm of this should be loud and terrible. This is represented, ver. 1. The children of Benjamin, in which tribe part of Jerusalem lay, are here called to shift for their own safety in the country; for the city to which it was first thought advisable for them to flee, chap. iv. 5, 6. would soon be made too hot for them, and they would find it the wisest course to flee out of the midst of it. It is common in public frights for people to think any place safer than that where they are; and therefore those in the city are for shifting into the country, in hopes there to escape out of danger; and those in the country are for shifting into the city, in hopes there to make head against the danger; but it is all in vain, when evil pursueth sinners with commission. They are bid to send the alarm into the country, and to do what they could for their own safety; *Blow the trumpet in Tekoa*, a city which lay twelve miles north from Jerusalem: Let them be stirred up to stand upon their guard; *Set up a sign of fire*, i. e. kindle the beacons, in Beth-haccerem, the house of the vineyard, which lay on a hill between Jerusalem and Tekoa. Prepare to make a vigorous resistance, for the evil appears out of the north. This may be taken ironically; Betake yourselves to the best methods you can think of for your own preservation, but all shall be in vain; for when you have done your best it will be a great destruction, for it is in vain to contend with God's judgments.

2. That the attempt upon them should be bold and formidable, and such as they should be a very unequal match for, (1.) See what the daughter of Zion is, on whom the assault is made; she is likened to a comely and delicate woman, ver. 2. bred up in every thing that is nice and soft, that will not let so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy, Deut. xxviii. 56. nor suffer the wind to blow upon her; and being not accustomed to hardship, she will be the less able to resist the enemy, for those that make war must endure hardness, or to bear the destruction with that patience that is necessary to make it any thing tolerable. The more we indulge ourselves in the pleasures of this life, the more we disfit ourselves for the troubles of this life. (2.) See what the daughter of Babylon is, by whom the assault is made. The generals and their armies are compared to shepherds and their flocks, ver. 3. in such number and in such order did they come; their soldiers followed their leaders, as the sheep their shepherds. The daughter of Zion dwelt at home (so some read it) expecting to be courted with love, but was invaded with fury. The comparing of the enemies to shepherds, inclines me to embrace another reading, which some give of ver. 2. The daughter of Zion is like a comely pasture-ground, and a delicate land which invites the shepherds to bring their flocks thither to graze; and as the shepherds easily make themselves masters of an open field (as was used then in some parts) lies common, owned by none, pitch their tents in it and their flocks presently eat it bare; so shall the Chaldean army easily break in upon the land of Judah, force for themselves a free quarter where they please, and in a little time devour all.

For the farther illustration of this he shews,

(1.) How God shall commission them to make this destruction even of the holy land and the holy city, that were his peculiar. It is he that saith, ver. 4. *Prepare ye war against her*; for he is the Lord of hosts, that hath all hosts

hosts at his command, and he hath said, *ver. 6. Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem*, in order to the attacking of it. The Chaldeans have great power against Judah and Jerusalem, and yet they have no power but what is given them from above. God has marked out Jerusalem for destruction; he hath said, *This is the city to be visited*, visited in wrath, visited by the divine justice, and this is the time of her visitation. Those that are careless and secure in sinful ways, the day is coming when they will be visited.

(2.) How they shall animate themselves and one another to execute that commission. God's counsels being against Jerusalem, which cannot be altered or disannulled, the counsels of war which the enemies held are made to agree with his counsels: God having said, *Prepare war against her*, their determinations are made subservient to his; and notwithstanding the distance of place, and the many difficulties that lay in the way, it is soon resolved, *nemine contradicente, Arise, and let us go*. Note, It is good to see how the counsel and decree of God is pursued and executed in the devices and designs of men, even theirs that know him not, *Ish. x. 6, 7*. In this campaign, (1.) they resolve to be very expeditious. They have no sooner resolved upon it, than they address themselves to it; it shall never be said they left any thing to be done towards it to-morrow, which they could do to-day. *Arise, let us go up at noon*, though it be in the heat of the day; nay, *ver. 5. Arise, let us go up by night*, though it be in the dark, nothing shall hinder them, they are resolved to *lose no time*. They are described as men in care to make dispatch, *ver. 4. Woe unto us, for the day goes away*, and we are not going on with our work; *the shadows of the evening are stretched out*, and we sit still and slip the opportunity. O that we were thus eager in our spiritual work and warfare! thus afraid of losing time, or any opportunity in taking the kingdom of heaven by violence! It is folly to trifle when we have an eternal salvation to work out, and the enemies of that salvation to fight against. (2.) They doubt not but to be very successful; *Let us go up*, and let us destroy her palaces, and make ourselves masters of the wealth that is in them. It was not that they might fulfil God's counsels, but that they might fill their own treasures, that they were thus eager, yet God thereby served his own purposes.

2. The cause of this judgment assigned. It is all for their wickedness; they have brought it upon themselves; they must bear it, for they must bear the blame of it; they are thus oppressed, because they have been oppressors; they have dealt hardly with one another, each in their turns, as they have had power and advantage, and now the enemy shall come, and deal hardly with them all. This sin of oppression, and violence, and wrong doing, is here charged upon them, (1.) As a national sin, *ver. 6. therefore this city is to be visited*; it is time to make inquisition, for she is wholly oppressed in the midst of her. All orders and degrees of men, from the prince on the throne to the meanest master of a shop, were oppressive to those that were under them. Look which way you will, and there were causes for complaints of this kind. (2.) As a sin that was become in a manner natural to them, *ver. 7. she casts out wickedness* in all the instances of malice and mischiefousness, as a fountain casteth out her waters, so plentifully and constantly; streams bitter and poisonous like the fountain. The waters out of the fountain will not be restrained, but will find or force their way, nor will they be checked by law or conscience in their violent proceedings. This is fitly applied to the corrupt heart of man in its natural state; that casts out wickedness, one evil imagination or other, as a fountain casts out her waters, naturally and easily, it is always flowing and yet always full. (3.) As that which was become a constant practice with them, *violence and spoil is heard in her*. The cry of it is come up before God as that of Sodom. *Before me continually is grief and wounds*. The complaint of those that find themselves aggrieved, being unjustly wounded in their bodies or spirits, in their estates or reputation. Note, He that is the common parent of mankind regards and resents, and sooner or later will revenge the mischiefs and wrongs that men do to one another.

3. The counsel given them, how to prevent this judgment. Fair warning is given, now upon the whole matter, *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem*, *ver. 8. Receive the instruction given thee both by the law of God and by his prophets*; be wise at length for thyself: they knew very well what they had been instructed to do, nothing remained but to do it, for till then they cannot be said to be instructed. The reason for this counsel is taken from the inevitable ruin they run upon, if they refused to comply with the instructions given them; *let my soul depart or be disjoined from thee*. This intimates what a tender affection and concern God had had for them; his very soul had been joined to them, and nothing but sin could disjoin it. Note, 1. The God of mercy is loth even to depart from a provoking people, and is earnest with them, by true repentance and reformation to prevent things coming to that extremity. 2. Their case is very miserable from whom God's soul is disjoined: it intimates the loss not only of their outward blessings, but of those comforts and favours, which are the more immediate and peculiar tokens of his love and presence. Compare this with that dreadful word, *Heb. x. 38. If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*. 3. Those whom God forsakes are certainly undone; when God's soul departs from Jerusalem, she soon becomes desolate and uninhabited, *Matth. xxiii. 38*.

9. ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thine hand as a grape-gatherer into the baskets. 10. To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. 11. Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days. 12. and their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD. 13. For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. 14. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace peace; when there is no peace. 15. Where they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the

time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD. 16. Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. 17. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

The heads of this paragraph are the very same with those of the last; for precept must be upon precept, and line upon line.

1. The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here threatened. We had before the haste which the Chaldean army made to the war, *ver. 4, 5*. Now here we have the havoc made by the war. How lamentably are the desolations here described! the enemy shall so long quarter amongst them, and be so insatiable in their thirst after blood and treasure, that they shall seize all they can meet with, and what escapes them one time shall fall into their hands another; *ver. 9. They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel, as a vine, as the grape-gatherer*, that is resolved to leave none behind, still turns back his hand into the baskets to put more in, till he has gathered all; so shall they be picked up by the enemy, though dispersed, though hid, and none of them shall escape their eye and hand. Perhaps this people being given to covetousness, *ver. 13*, had not observed that law of God, which forbade them to glean all their grapes, *Lev. xix. 10*, and now they themselves shall be in like manner thoroughly gleaned, and shall either fall by the sword or go into captivity. This is explained, *ver. 11, 12*, where God's fury and his hand are said to be poured out and stretched out, in the fury and by the hand of the Chaldeans; for even wicked men are often made use of as God's hand, *Psal. xvii. 14*, and in their anger we may see God angry. Now see on whom the fury is poured out in full phials; upon the children abroad, or in the streets, where they are playing? *Zeck. viii. 5*, or whether they run out innocently to look about them; the sword of the merciless Chaldeans shall not spare them, *chap. ix. 21*. The children perish in the calamity which the fathers' sins have procured. The execution shall likewise reach the assembly of young men, their merry meetings, their clubs which they keep up to strengthen one another's hands in wickedness, they shall be cut off together. Nor shall these only fall into the enemy's hands that meet for lewdness, *chap. v. 7*, but even the husband with the wife shall be taken, these two in bed together, and neither left, but both taken prisoners. And as they have no compassion for the weak but fair sex, so they have none for the decrepit but venerable age; the old with the full of days, whose death can contribute no more to their safety, then their lives to their service, that are not in a capacity to do them either good or harm, yet they shall be either cut off or carried off. Their houses shall then be turned to others, *ver. 12*, the conquerors shall dwell in their habitations, use their goods, and live upon their stores: their fields and wives shall fall together into their hands, as was threatened, *Deut. xxviii. 30, &c.* For God stretched out his hand upon the inhabitants of the land, and none can go out of the reach of it.

Now as to this denunciation of God's wrath, (1.) The prophet justifies himself in preaching thus terribly, for herein he dealt faithfully, *ver. 11. And I am full of the fury of the Lord*, full of the thoughts and apprehensions of it, and am carried out with a powerful impulse, by the spirit of prophecy, to speak of it thus vehemently. He took no delight in threatening, nor was it any pleasure to him with such sermons as these to make those about him uneasy; but he could not contain himself, he was weary with holding in: he suppressed it as long as he could, as long as he durst, but he was so full of power by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, that he must speak, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Note, When ministers preach the terrors of the Lord according to the scripture, we have no reason to be displeased at them; for they are but messengers, and must deliver their message, pleasing or displeasing. (2.) He condemns the false prophets, who preached playfully, for therein they flattered the people, and dealt unfaithfully, *ver. 13, 14. The priest and the prophet that should be their watchmen and monitors, have dealt falsely, have not been true to their trust, nor told the people their faults and the danger they were in: they should have been their physicians, but murdered their patients, by letting them have their wills, and giving them every thing they had a mind to, and flattering them into an opinion that they were in no danger, ver. 14. They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, or according to the cure of some slight hurt; skinning over the wound, and never searching it to the bottom; applying lenitives only, when there was need of corrosives, soothing people in their sins, and giving them opiates to make them easy for the present, while the disease was preying upon the vitals. They said, Peace, peace, all shall be well; if there were some thinking people among them, that were awake and apprehensive of danger, they soon stopped their mouths with their priestly and prophetic authority, boldly averring, that neither church nor state was in any danger; when there is no peace, because they go on in their idolatries and daring impieties. Note, Those are to be reckoned our false friends, that is, our worst and most dangerous enemies, that flatter us in a sinful way.*

2. The sin of Judah and Jerusalem is here discovered, which provoked God to bring this ruin upon them, and justified him in it.

1. They would by no means bear to be told of their faults, nor of the danger they were in. God bids the prophet give them warning of the judgment coming, *ver. 9*, but, saith he, *To whom shall I speak, and give warning?* I cannot find out any that will so much as give me a penitent hearing; I may give warning long enough, but here is nobody that will take warning: I cannot speak that they may hear, cannot speak to any purpose or with any hope of success; for their ear is uncircumcised, it is carnal and fleshly, indisposed to receive the voice of God, so that they cannot hearken. They have, as it were, a thick skin grown over the organs of hearing, so that divine things might to as much purpose be spoken to a stone as to them. Nay, they are not only deaf to it, but prejudiced against it; therefore they cannot hear, because they are resolved they will not. The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach. Both the reproofs and the threatenings of the word are so; they reckon themselves wronged and affronted by both, and resent the prophets plain-dealing with them, as they would the most causeless slander and calumny. This was kicking against the pricks, *Acts ix. 5*, as the lawyers against the word of Christ, *Luke xi. 45. Thus saying, thou reproachest us also*. Those reproofs that are counted reproaches, and hated as such, will certainly be turned into the heaviest woes. When it is here said, *They have no delight in the word*, more is implied than is expressed; they have an antipathy to it, their hearts rise at it; it exasperates them; and enrages their corruptions, and they are ready to fly in the face, and pull out the eyes of their reprovers. And how can those expect that the word of the Lord should speak any comfort to them who have no delight in it, but would rather be any where, than within hearing of it?

2. They were inordinately set upon the world, and wholly carried away by the love of it, *ver. 13. from the least of them even to the greatest*, old and young, rich and poor, high and low, those of all ranks, professions and employments

ployments, *every one is given to covetousness*, greedy of filthy lucre, all for what they can get, *per fas per nefas*, right or wrong, and this made them *oppressive and violent* ver. 6, 7. for of that evil as well as others the love of money is the bitter root. Nay, and this hardened their hearts against the word of God and his prophets; they were the *covetous Pharisees* that *derided Christ*, Luke xvi. 14.

3. They were become impudent in sin, and past shame. After such a high charge of flagrant crimes proved upon them, it was very proper to ask, ver. 19. *Were they ashamed when they had committed all these abominations*, which are such a reproach to their reason and religion? *Did they blush at the conviction*, and acknowledge that confusion of face belonged to them? If so, there is some hopes of them yet: but, alas! there did not appear so much as this colour of virtue among them; their hearts were so hardened, that they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush, they had so braced their faces. They even gloried in their wickedness, and openly confronted the convictions which should have humbled them, and brought them to repentance. They resolved to *face it out* against God himself, and not to own their guilt. Some refer it to the *priests and prophets* that had healed the people slightly, and told them they should have peace, and yet were not ashamed of their treachery and falsehood, no, not when the event disproved them and gave them the lie: Those that are *shameless and graceless*, and their curse *hopeless*. But they that will not submit to a penitential shame, nor take that to themselves as their due, shall not escape an utter ruin; for so it follows, *therefore they shall fall among them that fall*, they shall have their portion with those that are quite undone; and when God visits the nation in wrath, they shall be sure to be *cast down*, and be made to tremble, because they would not blush. Note, Those that sin and cannot blush for it, it is ill with them now, and will be worse with them shortly. At first they hardened themselves and would not blush, afterwards they were so hardened that they could not *quod unum habebant in malis bonum perdunt*, *peccandi circumdantiam*. Senec. de Vit. Beat.

3. They are put in mind of the good counsel which had been often given them, but in vain. They had a great deal said to them to little purpose.

1. By way of advice concerning their duty, ver. 16. God had been used to say to them, *Stand in the way and see*. That is, (1.) He would have them to consider, not to proceed rashly, but do as travellers in the road, who are in care to find the right way which will bring them to their journey's end, and therefore pause and enquire for it. If they have any reason to think they have missed their way, they are not easy till they have got satisfaction. O that men would be thus wise for their souls, and would ponder the path of their feet, as those that believe *lawful and unlawful* are of no less consequence to us, than the right way and the wrong is to a traveller! (2.) He would have them to consult antiquity, the observations and experiences of those that went before them. *Ask for the old paths*, enquire of the former age, Job. viii. 8. *Ask thy father, thy elders*, Deut. xxxii. 7. and thou wilt find that the way of godliness and righteousness hath always been the way that God hath owned and blessed, and in which men have prospered. *Ask for the old paths*, i. e. the paths prescribed by the law of God, the written word, that true standard of antiquity. *Ask for the paths that the patriarchs travelled in before you*, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and as you hope to inherit the promises made to them, tread in their steps. *Ask for the old paths, where is the good way?* We must not be guided purely by antiquity, as if the plea of prescription and long usage were alone sufficient to justify our path; no, there is an *old way*, which wicked men have trodden, Job. xxii. 15. But when we ask for the old paths, it is only in order to find out the *good way*, the high way of the upright. Note, The way of religion and godliness is a *good old way*; the way that all the saints in all ages have walked in. (3.) He would have them to resolve to act according to the result of these enquiries; when you have found out which is the good way walk therein; practise accordingly, keep close to that way, proceed and persevere in it. Some make this counsel to be given them with reference to the struggles that were between the true and false prophets; between those that said they should have peace, and those that told them trouble was at the door: they pretended they knew not which to believe; *Stand in the way*, faith God, and see, and enquire which of these two agrees with the written word, and the usual methods of God's providence, which of these direct you to the good way, and do accordingly. (4.) He assures them that if they do thus, it will secure the welfare and satisfaction of their own souls; *walk in the good old way*, and you will find that your walking in that way will be easy and pleasant; you will enjoy both your God and yourselves; and the way will lead you to true rest. Though it cost you some pains to walk in that way, you will find an abundant recompense at your journey's end. (5.) He laments it, that this good counsel, which was rational in itself, and so proper for them, could not find acceptance; *But they said, We will not walk therein*. Not only we will not be at the pains to enquire which is the good way, the good old way; but when it is told us, and we have nothing to say to the contrary but that it is the right way, yet we will not deny ourselves and our humours so far as to *walk in it*. Thus multitudes are ruined for ever by downright wilfulness.

2. By way of admonition concerning their danger; Because they would not be ruled by fair reasoning, God takes another method with them; by *lesser judgments* he threatens *greater*, and sends his prophets to give them this explication of them, and to frighten them with an apprehension of the danger they were in, ver. 17. *Also I set watchmen over you*. God's ministers are watchmen, and it is a great mercy to have them set over us in the Lord. Now observe here, (1.) The fair warning given by these watchmen: This was the burden of their song, they cried again and again, *Hearken to the sound of the trumpet*. God in his providence sounds a trumpet, Zech. viii. 14. The watchmen hear it themselves and are affected with it, Jer. iv. 19. and they are to call upon others to *hearken to it too*, to *hear the Lord's controversy*, to observe the voice of providence, to improve it, and answer the intentions of it. (2.) This fair warning slighted; *But they said, we will not hearken*; we will not hear, we will not heed, we will not believe; the prophets may as well save themselves and us the trouble. The reason why sinners perish, is, because they do not *hearken to the sound of the trumpet*; and the reason why they do not, is because they will not; and they have no reason to give why they will not, but because they will not; that is, they are herein most unreasonable. One may easier deal with *ten men's reasons* than *one man's will*.

18. ¶ Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. 19. Hear, O earth: behold I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. 20. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba? and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your

sacrifices sweet unto me. 21. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish. 22. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. 23. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea, and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion. 24. We have heard the fame thereof, our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as of a woman in travail. 25. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy, and fear is on every side. 26. ¶ O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make the mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation, for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us. 27. I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way. 28. They are all grievous revolters, walking with slander: they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters. 29. The bel lows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away. 30. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.

Here, 1. God appeals to all the neighbours, nay, to the whole world, concerning the equity of his proceedings against Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 18, 19. *Hear, ye nations and know particularly, O congregation of the mighty*, the great men of the nations, that take cognizance of the affairs of the states about you, and make remarks upon them. Observe now, what is doing among them of Judah and Jerusalem; you hear of the desolations brought upon them, the earth rings of it, trembles under it; you all wonder that I should bring evil upon this people, that are in a covenant with me, that prefers relation to me, that have worshipped me, and been highly favoured by me; you are ready to ask, *Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land?* Deut. xxix. 24. Know then, (1.) That it is the natural product of their devices: the evil brought upon them is the fruit of their thought: They thought to strengthen themselves by their alliance with foreigners, and by that very thing they weakened and diminished themselves, they betrayed and exposed themselves. (2.) That it is the just punishment of their disobedience and rebellion: God doth but execute upon them the curse for the law of their violations of the commands of it. It is because they have not hearkened to my words, nor to my law, nor regarded a word I have said to them, but rejected it all. They should never have been ruined thus by the judgments of God's hand, but they have refused to be ruled by the judgments of his mouth: therefore you cannot say they have any wrong done them.

2. God rejects their plea, by which they insisted upon their external services as sufficient to atone for all their sins. Alas! it is a frivolous plea, ver. 20. *To what purpose comes there to me incense and sweet cane*, to be burned for a perfume on the golden altar, though it was the best of the kind, and far-fetched? What care I for your burnt offerings and your sacrifices? They not only cannot profit God, so no sacrifices doth, Psalm l. 9. but they do not please him, for to none doth but the sacrifice of the upright: that of the wicked is an *abomination to him*: Sacrifice and incense were appointed to excite their repentance, and to direct them to a mediator, and assist their faith in him. And where this good use was made of them, they were acceptable, God had respect to them and to those that offered them: But when they were offered with an opinion that thereby they made God their debtor, and purchased a licence to go on in sin, they were so far from being pleasing to God, that they were a provocation to him.

3. He foretels the desolation that was now coming upon them. (1.) God designs their ruin because they hate to be reformed, ver. 21. *I will lay stumbling blocks before this people*, occasions of falling not into sin but into trouble: Those whom God has marked for destruction, he perplexeth, and embarrasseth their counsels, and obstructs and retards all the methods they take for their own safety. The parties of the enemy which they met with wherever they went, were *stumbling-blocks* to them, in every corner they stumbled upon them, and were dashed to pieces by them: *The fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them*; neither the fathers with their wisdom, nor the sons with their strength and courage, shall escape them or get over them: The sons that sinned with their fathers fall with them. Even the neighbour and his friend shall perish, and not be able to help either themselves or one another. (2.) He will make use of the Chaldeans as instruments of it; for whatever work God has to do, he will find out proper instruments for doing of it. This is a people fetched from the north, from the sides of the earth. Babylon itself lay a great way off northwards; and some of the countries that were subject to the king of Babylon, out of which his army was levied, lay much farther. These must be employed in this service, ver. 22, 23. For (1.) It is a people very numerous, *a great nation*, which will make their invasion the more formidable. (2.) It is a warlike people; they lay hold on bow and spear, and at this time know how to use them, for they are used to them; they ride upon horses, and therefore they march the more swiftly, and in battle press the harder. No nation had yet brought into the field a better cavalry than the Chaldeans. (3.) It is a barbarous people; they are cruel, and have no mercy, being greedy of prey, and flushed with victory: they take a pride in frightening all about them; their voice roars like the sea. And lastly, they have a particular design upon Judah and Jerusalem, in hopes greatly to enrich themselves with the spoil of that famous country: They are set in array against thee, O daughter of Zion. The sins of God's professing people make them an easy prey to those that are God's enemies as well as their's.

4. He describes the very great consternation which Judah and Jerusalem should be in upon the approach of this formidable enemy, ver. 24, 25, 26. (1.) They own themselves in a fright upon the first intelligence brought them of the approach of the enemy; when we have but heard the fame thereof, our hands wax feeble, and we have not heart to make any resistance; anguish has taken hold of us, and we are in an extremity of pain presently, like that of a woman in travail. Note, Sense of guilt quite dispirits men upon approach of any threatening trouble: What can they hope to do for themselves that have made God their enemy? (2.) They confine them-

themselves by consent to their houses, not daring to shew their heads abroad : for though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and sneakingly there, than run any venture either by fight or flight to help themselves. Thus they say one to another, *Go not forth into the field, no, not to fetch in your provision thence, nor walk by the way, dare not go to church, or market, it is at your peril if you do, for the sword of the enemy, and the fear of it is on every side, the highways are unoccupied, as in Jael's time, Judges v. 7. Let this mind us when we travel the road in safety, and there is none to make us afraid, to bless God for our share in the public tranquillity.* (3.) The prophet calls upon them sadly to lament the desolations that were coming upon them. He was himself the lamenting prophet, and called upon his people to join with him in his lamentations. *O daughter of my people, hear thy God calling thee to weeping and mourning, and answer his call: do not only put on sackcloth for a day, but gird it on for thy constant wear: Do not only put ashes on thy head, but wallow thyself in ashes: Put thyself into close mourning, and all the tokens of bitter lamentation, not forced and for shew only, but with the greatest sincerity, as parents mourn for an only son, and think themselves comfortless because they are childless. Thus do thou lament for the spoiler that suddenly comes upon us: Though he is not come yet, he is coming; the decree is gone forth, therefore let us meet the execution of it with an agreeable sadness. As saints may rejoice in hope of God's mercies, though they see them only in the promise, so sinners must mourn for fear of God's judgments, though they see them only in the threatenings.*

5. He constitutes the prophet a judge over this people that now stand upon their trial; as chap. i. 10. *I have set thee over the nations; so here, I have set thee for a tower, or as a sentinel or a watchman upon a tower among my people, as an inspector of their actions; that thou mayest know and try their way, ver. 27.* Not that God needed any to inform him concerning them; on the contrary, the prophet knew little of them in comparison, but by the spirit of prophecy: but thus God appeals to the prophet himself, and his own observation concerning their character, that he might be fully satisfied in the equity of God's proceedings against them, and with the more assurance give them warning of the judgments coming. God set him for a tower, conspicuous to all, and attacked by many, but made him a fortress, a strong tower, gave him courage to stem the tide, and bear the shock of their displeasure. They that will be faithful reprovers, have need to be firm as fortresses.

Now in trying their way he will find two things;

1. That they are wretchedly debauched, ver. 28. *They are all grievous revolters, revolters of revolters, so the word is, the worst of revolters, as a servant of servants is the meanest of servants. They have a revolting heart, have deeply revolted, and revolt more and more. They have seemed to start fair, but they revolt and start back: They walk with slanders, they make nothing of belying and backbiting one another; nay, they make a perfect trade of it, it is their constant course: And they govern themselves by the slanders they hear, hating those that they hear ill spoken of, though never so unjustly. They are brass and iron, base metals, and there is nothing in them that is valuable: They were as silver and gold, but they are degenerated. Nay, as they are all revolters, so they are all corrupters, not only debauched themselves, but industrious to debauch others, to corrupt them as they themselves are corrupt; nay, to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. It is often so, sinners soon become tempters.*

2. That they would never be reclaimed and reformed; it was in vain to think of reducing them, for various methods had been tried with them, and all to no purpose, ver. 29, 30. He compares them to ore that was supposed to have some good metal in it, and was therefore put into the furnace by the refiner, who used all his art, and took abundance of pains about it, but it proved all dross, nothing of any value can be extracted out of it. God by his prophets and by his providences had used the most proper means to refine this people, and to purify them from their wickedness; but it was all in vain: By the continual preaching of the word, and a series of afflictions, they had been kept in a constant fire, but all to no purpose. The bellows have been still kept so near the fire to blow it, that they are burnt with the heat of it, or they are quite worn out with long use, and thrown into the fire as good for nothing. The prophets have preached their throats sore with crying aloud against the sins of Israel, and yet they are not convinced and humbled. The lead, which was then used in refining silver, as quicksilver is now, consumed of the fire, and has not done its work; for the sounder melteth in vain, his labour is lost, for the wicked are not plucked away, no care is taken to separate between the precious and the vile, to purge out the old leaven, to cast out of communion those who being corrupt themselves, are in danger of infecting others. Or, their wickednesses are not removed, so some read it, they are still as bad as ever, and nothing will prevail to part between them and their sins: they will not be brought off from their idolatries and immoralities by all they have heard, and all they have felt of the wrath of God against them. And therefore that doom is passed upon them, ver. 30. *Reprobate silver shall be called useless and worthless, they glitter as if they had some silver in them, but there is nothing of real virtue or goodness to be found among them; and for this reason the Lord has rejected them: He will no more own them as his people, nor look for any good from them; he will take them away like dross, Psa. cxix. 119. and prepare a consuming fire for those that would not be purified by a refining fire.* By this it appears, (1.) That God hath no pleasure in the death and ruin of sinners, for he tries all ways and methods with them to prevent their destruction, and qualify them for salvation: Both his ordinances and his providences have a tendency this way, to part between them and their sins; and yet with many it is all lost labour, *we have piped unto you and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not wept.* Therefore, (2.) God will be justified in the death of sinners, and all the blame will lie upon themselves. He did not reject them till he had used all proper means to reduce them; did not cast them off so long as there was any hopes of them, nor abandon them as dross till it appeared they were reprobate silver.

C H A P. VII.

The prophet having in God's name reproved the people for their sins, and given them warning of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, in this chapter prosecutes the same intention for their humiliation and awakening. (1.) He shews them the invalidity of the plea they so much relied on, that they had the temple of God among them, and constantly attended the service of it, and endeavours to take them off from their confidence in their external privileges and performances, ver. 1—11. (2.) He minds them of the desolations of Shiloh; and foretells that such should be the desolations of Jerusalem, ver. 12—16. (3.) He represents to the prophet their abominable idolatries, for which he was thus incensed against them, ver. 17—20. (4.) He sets before the people that fundamental maxim of religion, that to obey

is better than sacrifice, 1 Sam. xv. 22. and that God would not accept the sacrifices of those that obstinately persisted in disobedience, ver. 21—28. (5.) He threatens to lay the land utterly waste for their idolatry and impiety, and to multiply their pain as they had multiplied their sin, ver. 29—34.

1. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. 3. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. 4. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. 5. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour: 6. If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: 7. Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. 8. ¶ Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. 9. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10. And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11. Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD. 12. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. 13. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: 14. Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. 15. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

These verses begin another sermon, which is continued in this and the two following chapters; much to the same effect with those before, to reason them to repentance. Observe,

1. The orders given to the prophet to preach this sermon; for he had not only a general commission, but particular directions and instructions for every message he delivered. This was a word that came to him from the Lord, ver. 1. We are not told when this sermon was to be preached. But are told, (1.) Where it must be preached, *in the gates of the Lord's house*, through which they entered into the outer court, or the court of the people. It would affront the priests, and expose the prophet to their rage, to have such a message as this delivered unto their noses, and within their precincts; but the prophet must not fear the face of man, he cannot be faithful to his God if he do. (2.) To whom it must be preached, *to the men of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord*; probably it was at one of the three feasts, when all the males from all parts of the country were to appear before the Lord in the courts of his house, and not to appear empty: then he had many together to preach to, and that was the most seasonable time to admonish them not to trust to their privileges. Note, 1. Even those that do profess religion have need to be preached to, as well as those that are without. 2. It is desirable to have an opportunity of preaching to many together. Wisdom chooseth to cry in the chief place of concourse, and as Jeremiah here in the opening of the gates, the temple gates. 3. When we are going to worship God, we have need to be admonished to worship him in the spirit, and to have no confidence in the flesh, Phil. iii. 3.

3. The contents and scope of the sermon itself. It is delivered in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who commands the world, but covenants with his people: As creatures we are bound to regard the Lord of hosts, as Christians the God of Israel; what he said to them he saith to us: and it is much the same with that which John Baptist said to those whom he baptized, *Matt. iii. 8, 9. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves we have Abraham to our father.* The prophet here tells them,

1. What were the true words of God which they might trust to. In short, they might depend upon it, that if they would repent and reform their lives, and return to God in a way of duty, he would restore and confirm their peace, would redress their grievances, and return to them in a way of mercy, ver. 4. *Amend your ways and your doings.* This implies, that there had been much amiss in their ways and doings, many faults and errors: But it is a great instance of the favour of God to them, that he gives them liberty to amend, shews them where and how they must amend, and promiseth to accept them upon their amendment; *I will cause you to dwell quietly and peaceably in this place, and a stop shall be put to that which threatens your expulsion.* Reformation is the only way, and a sure way to prevent ruin.

He explains himself, ver. 5, 6, 7. and tells them particularly,

(1.) What the amendment was which he expected from them. They must thoroughly amend, in making good they must make good their ways and doings; they must reform with resolution, and it must be an universal, constant, persevering reformation; not partial, but entire; not hypocritical, but sincere; not wavering, but constant. They must make the tree good, and so make the fruit good; must amend their hearts and thoughts, and so amend their ways and doings. In particular, (1.) They must be honest and just in all their dealings. They that had power in their hand must thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour without partiality, and according as the

ployments, *every one is given to covetousness*, greedy of filthy lucre, all for what they can get, *per fas per nefas*, right or wrong, and this made them *oppressive and violent* ver. 6, 7. for of that evil as well as others the love of money is the bitter root. Nay, and this hardened their hearts against the word of God and his prophets; they were the *covetous* Pharisees that *derided* Christ, *Luke xvi. 14.*

3. They were become impudent in sin, and past shame. After such a high charge of flagrant crimes proved upon them, it was very proper to ask, *ver. 15. Were they ashamed when they had committed all these abominations*, which are such a reproach to their reason and religion? *Did they blush at the conviction*, and acknowledge that confusion of face belonged to them? If so, there is some hopes of them yet: but, alas! there did not appear so much as this *colour of virtue* among them; their hearts were so hardened, that *they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush*, they had so brazened their faces. They even gloried in their wickedness, and openly confronted the convictions which should have humbled them, and brought them to repentance. They resolved to *face it out* against God himself, and not to own their guilt. Some refer it to the *priests and prophets* that had healed the people slightly, and told them they should have peace, and yet were *not ashamed* of their treachery and falsehood, no, not when the event disproved them and gave them the lie: Those that are *shameless and graceless*, and their curse *hopeless*. But they that will not submit to a *penitential shame*, nor take that to themselves as their due, shall not escape an *utter ruin*; for so it follows, *therefore they shall fall among them that fall*, they shall have their portion with those that are quite undone; and when God visits the nation in wrath, they shall be sure to be *cast down*, and be made to *tremble*, because they would not *blush*. Note, Those that sin and cannot blush for it, it is ill with them now, and will be worse with them shortly. At first they hardened themselves and would not blush, afterwards they were so hardened that they could not *quod unum habebant in malis bonam perdunt, peccandi verecundiam*. Senec. de Vit. Beat.

3. They are put in mind of the good counsel which had been often given them, but in vain. They had a great deal said to them to little purpose.

1. By way of advice concerning their duty, *ver. 16.* God had been used to say to them, *Stand in the way and see*. That is, (1.) He would have them to *consider*, not to proceed *rushly*, but do as travellers in the road, who are in care to find the right way which will bring them to their journey's end, and therefore pause and enquire for it. If they have any reason to think they have missed their way, they are not easy till they have got satisfaction. O that men would be thus *wise for their souls*, and would ponder the path of their feet, as those that believe *lawful and unlawful* are of no less consequence to us, than the right way and the wrong is to a traveller! (2.) He would have them to *consult* antiquity, the observations and experiences of those that went before them. *Ask for the old paths, enquire of the former age*, Job. viii. 8. *Ask thy father, thy elders*, Deut. xxxii. 7. and thou wilt find that the way of godliness and righteousness hath always been the way that God hath owned and blessed, and in which men have prospered. *Ask for the old paths*, i. e. the paths prescribed by the law of God, the written word, that true standard of antiquity. *Ask for the paths* that the patriarchs travelled in before you, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and as you hope to inherit the promises made to them, tread in their steps. *Ask for the old paths, where is the good way?* We must not be guided purely by antiquity, as if the plea of prescription and long usage were alone sufficient to justify our path; no, there is an *old way, which wicked men have trodden*, Job. xxii. 15. But when we ask for the old paths, it is only in order to find out the *good way*, the high way of the upright. Note, The way of religion and godliness is a *good old way*; the way that all the faints in all ages have walked in. (3.) He would have them to *resolve* to act according to the result of these enquiries; when you have found out which is the *good way walk therein*; practise accordingly, keep close to that way, proceed and persevere in it. Some make this counsel to be given them with reference to the struggles that were between the true and false prophets; between those that said they should have peace, and those that told them trouble was at the door: they pretended they knew not which to believe; *Stand in the way*, faith God, and see, and enquire which of these two agrees with the written word, and the usual methods of God's providence, which of these direct you to the good way, and do accordingly. (4.) He assures them that if they do thus, it will secure the welfare and satisfaction of their own souls; *walk in the good old way*, and you will find that your walking in that way will be easy and pleasant; you will enjoy both your God and yourselves; and the way will lead you to true rest. Though it cost you some pains to walk in that way, you will find an abundant recompense at your journey's end. (5.) He laments it, that this good counsel, which was rational in itself, and so proper for them, could not find acceptance; *But they said, We will not walk therein*. Not only we will not be at the pains to enquire which is the *good way*, the *good old way*; but when it is told us, and we have nothing to say to the contrary but that it is the right way, yet we will not deny ourselves and our humours so far as to *walk in it*. Thus multitudes are ruined for ever by downright wilfulness.

2. By way of admonition concerning their danger; Because they would not be ruled by fair reasoning, God takes another method with them; by *lessor judgments* he threatens *greater*, and sends his prophets to give them this explication of them, and to frighten them with an apprehension of the danger they were in, *ver. 17. Alas I set watchmen over you*. God's ministers are watchmen, and it is a great mercy to have them *set over us* in the Lord. Now observe here, (1.) The fair warning given by these watchmen: This was the burden of their song, they cried again and again, *Hearken to the sound of the trumpet*. God in his providence sounds a trumpet, *Zech. viii. 14.* The watchmen hear it themselves and are affected with it *Jer. iv. 19.* and they are to call upon others to *hearken* to it too, to *hear the Lord's controversy*, to observe the voice of providence, to improve it, and answer the intentions of it. (2.) This fair warning slighted; *But they said, we will not hearken*; we will not hear, we will not heed, we will not believe; the prophets may as well save themselves and us the trouble. The reason why sinners perish, is, because they do not *hearken to the sound of the trumpet*; and the reason why they do not, is because they *will not*; and they have no reason to give why they will not, but *because* they will not; that is, they are herein most unreasonable. One may easier deal with *ten men's reasons* than *one man's will*.

18. ¶ Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. 19. Hear, O earth: behold I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. 20. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba? and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your

sacrifices sweet unto me. 21. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish. 22. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. 23. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea, and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion. 24. We have heard the fame thereof, our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as of a woman in travail. 25. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy, and fear is on every side. 26. ¶ O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make the mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation, for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us. 27. I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way. 28. They are all grievous revolters, walking with slander: they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters. 29. The bells are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away. 30. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.

Here, 1. God appeals to all the neighbours, nay, to the whole world, concerning the equity of his proceedings against Judah and Jerusalem, *ver. 18, 19. Hear, ye nations and know* particularly, O congregation of the mighty, the great men of the nations, that take cognizance of the affairs of the states about you, and make remarks upon them. Observe now, what is doing among them of Judah and Jerusalem; you hear of the desolations brought upon them, the earth rings of it, trembles under it; you all wonder that I should bring evil upon this people, that are in a covenant with me, that prefer relation to me, that have worshipped me, and been highly favoured by me; you are ready to ask, *Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land?* Deut. xxix. 24. Know then, (1.) That it is the *natural product* of their devices: the evil brought upon them is the *fruit of their thought*: They thought to strengthen themselves by their alliance with foreigners, and by that very thing they weakened and diminished themselves, they betrayed and exposed themselves. (2.) That it is the *just punishment* of their disobedience and rebellion: God doth but execute upon them the curse for the law of their violations of the commands of it. It is because they have not hearkened to my words, nor to my law, nor regarded a word I have said to them, but rejected it all. They should never have been ruined thus by the judgments of God's hand, but they have refused to be ruled by the judgments of his mouth: therefore you cannot say they have any wrong done them.

2. God rejects their plea, by which they insisted upon their external services as sufficient to atone for all their sins. Alas! it is a frivolous plea, *ver. 20. To what purpose comes there to me incense and sweet cane*, to be burned for a perfume on the golden altar, though it was the best of the kind, and far-fetched? What care I for your burnt offerings and your sacrifices? They not only cannot profit God, so no sacrifices doth, *Psal. l. 9.* but they do not please him, for so none doth but the sacrifice of the upright: that of the wicked is an *abomination to him*: Sacrifice and incense were appointed to excite their repentance, and to direct them to a mediator, and assist their faith in him. And where this good use was made of them, they were acceptable, God had respect to them and to those that offered them: But when they were offered with an opinion that thereby they made God their debtor, and purchased a licence to go on in sin, they were so far from being pleasing to God, that they were a provocation to him.

3. He foretells the desolation that was now coming upon them. (1.) God designs their ruin because they hate to be reformed, *ver. 21. I will lay stumbling blocks before this people*, occasions of falling not into sin but into trouble: Those whom God has marked for destruction, he perplexeth, and embarrasseth their counsels, and obstructs and retards all the methods they take for their own safety. The parties of the enemy which they met with wherever they went, were *stumbling-blocks* to them, in every corner they stumbled upon them, and were dashed to pieces by them: *The fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them*; neither the fathers with their wisdom, nor the sons with their strength and courage, shall escape them or get over them: The sons that sinned with their fathers fall with them. Even the neighbour and his friend shall perish, and not be able to help either themselves or one another. (2.) He will make use of the Chaldeans as instruments of it; for whatever work God has to do, he will find out proper instruments for doing of it. This is a people fetched from the north, from the sides of the earth. Babylon itself lay a great way off northwards; and some of the countries that were subject to the king of Babylon, out of which his army was levied, lay much farther. These must be employed in this service, *ver. 22, 23.* For (1.) It is a people very numerous, a great nation, which will make their invasion the more formidable. (2.) It is a warlike people; they lay hold on bow and spear, and at this time know how to use them, for they are used to them; they ride upon horses, and therefore they march the more swiftly, and in battle press the harder. No nation had yet brought into the field a better cavalry than the Chaldeans. (3.) It is a barbarous people; they are cruel, and have no mercy, being greedy of prey, and flushed with victory: they take a pride in frightening all about them; their voice roars like the sea. And lastly, they have a particular design upon Judah and Jerusalem, in hopes greatly to enrich themselves with the spoil of that famous country: They are set in array against thee, O daughter of Zion. The sins of God's professing people make them an easy prey to those that are God's enemies as well as their's.

4. He describes the very great consternation which Judah and Jerusalem should be in upon the approach of this formidable enemy, *ver. 24, 25, 26.* (1.) They own themselves in a fright upon the first intelligence brought them of the approach of the enemy; when we have but heard the fame thereof, our hands wax feeble, and we have not heart to make any resistance; anguish has taken hold of us, and we are in an extremity of pain presently, like that of a woman in travail. Note, Sense of guilt quite dispirits men upon approach of any threatening trouble: What can they hope to do for themselves that have made God their enemy? (2.) They confine themselves

themselves by consent to their houses, not daring to shew their heads abroad : for though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and sneakingly there, than run any venture either by fight or flight to help themselves. Thus they say one to another, *Go not forth into the field*, no, not to fetch in your provision thence, *nor walk by the way*, dare not go to church, or market, it is at your peril if you do, for the sword of the enemy, and the fear of it is on every side, the highways are unoccupied, as in Jael's time, *Judges v. 7*. Let this mind us when we travel the road in safety, and there is none to make us afraid, to bless God for our share in the public tranquillity. (3.) The prophet calls upon them sadly to lament the desolations that were coming upon them. He was himself the lamenting prophet, and called upon his people to join with him in his lamentations. *O daughter of my people*, hear thy God calling thee to weeping and mourning, and answer his call : do not only put on sackcloth for a day, but *gird it on for thy constant wear* : Do not only put ashes on thy head, but *wallow thyself in ashes* : Put thyself into close mourning, and all the tokens of bitter lamentation, not forced and for shew only, but with the greatest sincerity, as parents *mourn for an only son*, and think themselves comfortless because they are childless. Thus do thou lament for the spoiler that suddenly comes upon us : Though he is not come yet, he is coming ; the decree is gone forth, therefore let us meet the execution of it with an agreeable sadness. As saints may rejoice in hope of God's mercies, though they see them only in the promise, so sinners must mourn for fear of God's judgments, though they see them only in the threatenings.

5. He constitutes the prophet a judge over this people that now stand upon their trial ; as *chap. i. 10*. *I have set thee over the nations* ; so here, *I have set thee for a tower*, or as a sentinel or a watchmen upon a tower among my people, as an inspector of their actions ; *that thou mayest know and try their way*, ver. 27. Not that God needed any to inform him concerning them ; on the contrary, the prophet knew little of them in comparison, but by the spirit of prophecy : but thus God appeals to the prophet himself, and his own observation concerning their character, that he might be fully satisfied in the equity of God's proceedings against them, and with the more assurance give them warning of the judgments coming. God set him for a tower, conspicuous to all, and attacked by many, but made him a fortress, a strong tower, gave him courage to stem the tide, and bear the shock of their displeasure. They that will be faithful reprovers, have need to be firm as fortresses.

Now in trying their way he will find two things :

1. That they are wretchedly debauched, ver. 28. *They are all grievous revolters, revolters of revolters*, so the word is, the worst of revolters, as a *servant of servants* is the meanest of servants. They have a *revolting heart*, have deeply revolted, and revolt more and more. They have seemed to start fair, but they revolt and start back : They walk with flanders, they make nothing of belying and backbiting one another ; nay, they make a perfect trade of it, it is their constant course : And they govern themselves by the flanders they hear, hating those that they hear ill spoken of, though never so unjustly. They are *brass and iron*, base metals, and there is nothing in them that is valuable : They were as *silver and gold*, but they are degenerated. Nay, as they are all revolters, so they are all corrupters, not only debauched themselves, but industrious to debauch others, to corrupt them as they themselves are corrupt ; nay, to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. It is often so, sinners soon become tempters.

2. That they would never be reclaimed and reformed ; it was in vain to think of reducing them, for various methods had been tried with them, and all to no purpose, ver. 29, 30. He compares them to ore that was supposed to have some good metal in it, and was therefore put into the furnace by the refiner, who used all his art, and took abundance of pains about it, but it proved all dross, nothing of any value can be extracted out of it. God by his prophets and by his providences had used the most proper means to refine this people, and to purify them from their wickedness ; but it was all in vain : By the continual preaching of the word, and a series of afflictions, they had been kept in a constant fire, but all to no purpose. The bellows have been still kept so near the fire to blow it, that they are burnt with the heat of it, or they are quite worn out with long use, and thrown into the fire as good for nothing. The prophets have preached their throats sore with crying aloud against the sins of Israel, and yet they are not convinced and humbled. The lead, which was then used in refining silver, as quicksilver is now, consumed of the fire, and has not done its work ; for the *founder melteth in vain*, his labour is lost, for the wicked are not plucked away, no care is taken to separate between the precious and the vile, to purge out the old leaven, to cast out of communion those who being corrupt themselves, are in danger of infecting others. Or, their wickednesses are not removed, so some read it, they are still as bad as ever, and nothing will prevail to part between them and their sins : they will not be brought off from their idolatries and immoralities by all they have heard, and all they have felt of the wrath of God against them. And therefore that doom is passed upon them, ver. 30. *Reprobate silver shall be called useless and worthless*, they glitter as if they had some silver in them, but there is nothing of real virtue or goodness to be found among them ; and for this reason the Lord has rejected them : He will no more own them as his people, nor look for any good from them ; he will take them away like dross, *Psal. cxix. 119*. and prepare a consuming fire for those that would not be purified by a refining fire. By this it appears, (1.) That God hath no pleasure in the death and ruin of sinners, for he tries all ways and methods with them to prevent their destruction, and qualify them for salvation : Both his ordinances and his providences have a tendency this way, to part between them and their sins ; and yet with many it is all lost labour, *we have piped unto you and you have not danced ; we have mourned unto you, and you have not wept*. Therefore, (2.) God will be justified in the death of sinners, and all the blame will lie upon themselves. He did not reject them till he had used all proper means to reduce them ; did not cast them off so long as there was any hopes of them, nor abandon them as dross till it appeared they were reprobate silver.

C H A P. VII.

The prophet having in God's name reproved the people for their sins, and given them warning of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, in this chapter prosecutes the same intention for their humiliation and awakening. (1.) He shews them the invalidity of the plea they so much relied on, that they had the temple of God among them, and constantly attended the service of it, and endeavours to take them off from their confidence in their external privileges and performances, ver. 1—11. (2.) He minds them of the desolations of Shiloh ; and foretells that such should be the desolations of Jerusalem, ver. 12—16. (3.) He represents to the prophet their abominable idolatries, for which he was thus incensed against them, ver. 17—20. (4.) He sets before the people that fundamental maxim of religion, that to obey

is better than sacrifice, 1 Sam. xv. 22. and that God would not accept the sacrifices of those that obstinately persisted in disobedience, ver. 21—28 (5.) He threatens to lay the land utterly waste for their idolatry and impiety, and to multiply their slain as they had multiplied their sin, ver. 29—34.

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. 3. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. 4. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. 5. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings ; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour : 6. If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt : 7. Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. 8. ¶ Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. 9. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not ; 10. And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations ? 11. Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes ? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD. 12. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. 13. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not ; and I called you, but ye answered not : 14. Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. 15. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

These verses begin another sermon, which is continued in this and the two following chapters ; much to the same effect with those before, to reason them to repentance. Observe,

1. The orders given to the prophet to preach this sermon ; for he had not only a general commission, but particular directions and instructions for every message he delivered. This was a word that came to him from the Lord, ver. 1. We are not told when this sermon was to be preached. But are told, (1.) Where it must be preached, in the gates of the Lord's house, through which they entered into the outer court, or the court of the people. It would affront the priests, and expose the prophet to their rage, to have such a message as this delivered unto their noses, and within their precincts ; but the prophet must not fear the face of man, he cannot be faithful to his God if he do. (2.) To whom it must be preached, to the men of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord ; probably it was at one of the three feasts, when all the males from all parts of the country were to appear before the Lord in the courts of his house, and not to appear empty ; then he had many together to preach to, and that was the most reasonable time to admonish them not to trull to their privileges. Note, 1. Even those that do profess religion have need to be preached to, as well as those that are without. 2. It is desirable to have an opportunity of preaching to many together. Wisdom chooseth to cry in the chief place of concourse, and as Jeremiah here in the opening of the gates, the temple gates. 3. When we are going to worship God, we have need to be admonished to worship him in the spirit, and to have no confidence in the flesh, Phil. iii. 3.

3. The contents and scope of the sermon itself. It is delivered in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who commands the world, but covenants with his people : As creatures we are bound to regard the Lord of hosts, as Christians the God of Israel ; what he said to them he saith to us ; and it is much the same with that which John Baptist said to those whom he baptized, *Matt. iii. 8, 9*. *Bring forth fruits meet for repentance ; and think not to say within yourselves we have Abraham to our father*. The prophet here tells them,

1. What were the true words of God which they might trust to. In short, they might depend upon it, that if they would repent and reform their lives, and return to God in a way of duty, he would restore and confirm their peace, would redress their grievances, and return to them in a way of mercy, ver. 4. *Amend your ways and your doings*. This implies, that there had been much amiss in their ways and doings, many faults and errors : But it is a great instance of the favour of God to them, that he gives them liberty to amend, shews them where and how they must amend, and promiseth to accept them upon their amendment ; *I will cause you to dwell quietly and peaceably in this place*, and a stop shall be put to that which threatens your expulsion. Reformation is the only way, and a sure way to prevent ruin.

He explains himself, ver. 5, 6, 7. and tells them particularly,

(1.) What the amendment was which he expected from them. They must thoroughly amend, in making good they must make good their ways and doings ; they must reform with resolution, and it must be an universal, constant, persevering reformation ; not partial, but entire ; not hypocritical, but sincere ; not wavering, but constant. They must make the tree good, and so make the fruit good ; must amend their hearts and thoughts, and so amend their ways and doings. In particular, (1.) They must be honest and just in all their dealings. They that had power in their hand must thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour without partiality, and according as the

merits of the cause appeared; They must not either in judgment or in contract oppress the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor countenance or protect those that did oppress, nor refuse to do them right when they sought for it: They must not shed innocent blood, and with it defile this place and the land wherein they dwell. (2.) They must keep close to the worship of the true God only, neither walk after other gods; do not hanker after them, not hearken to those that would draw you into communion with idolaters; for it is and will be to your own hurt: Be not only so just to your God, but so wise for yourselves, as not to throw away your adorations upon those that are not able to help you, and therefore provoke him who is able to destroy you. Well, this is all that God insists upon.

(2.) He tells them what the establishment is which upon this amendment they may expect from him, *ver. 7.* Set about such a work of reformation as this with all speed, go through with it, and abide by it, *And I will cause you to dwell in this place,* this temple, shall continue your place of resort and refuge; the place of your comfortable meeting with God and one another; and you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever, and shall never be turned out either from God's house or your own. It is promised that they shall still enjoy their civil and sacred privileges; that they shall have a comfortable enjoyment of them, *I will cause you to dwell here,* and those dwell at ease whom God gives a settlement to; they shall enjoy it by covenant, by virtue of the grant made of it to their fathers, not by providence, but promise. They shall continue in the enjoyment of it without eviction or molestation; they shall not be disturbed, much less dispossessed; for ever and ever; nothing but sin would throw them out. An everlasting inheritance in the heavenly Canaan is hereby secured to all that live in godliness and honesty. And the vulgar Latin reads a farther privilege here, *ver. 8—7. Habitabo vobiscum, I will dwell with you in this place,* and we should find Canaan itself but an uncomfortable place to dwell in, if God do not dwell with us there.

2. What were the lying words of their own hearts which they must not trust to. He cautions them against this self-conceit, *ver. 4. Trust ye not in lying words;* you are told in what way, and upon what terms you may be easy, safe, and happy; now do not flatter yourselves with an opinion that you may be so on any other terms, or in any other way; yet he chargeth them with this self-deceit arising from a self-conceit, *ver. 8. Behold, it is plain you do trust in lying words notwithstanding what is said to you; you trust in words that cannot profit, you rely upon a plea that will stand you in no stead:* They that slight the words of truth which would profit them, take shelter in words of falsehood that cannot profit them. Now these lying words were, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.* The buildings, the courts, the holy place, and the holy of holies, are the temple of the Lord, built by his appointment, to his glory; here he resides, here he is worshipped, here we meet three times a year to pay our homage to him as our king in his palace. This they thought was security enough to them to keep God and his favours from leaving them, God and his judgments from breaking in upon them. When the prophets told them how sinful they were, and how miserable they were likely to be, still they appealed to the temple; how can we neither be so or so, as long as we have that holy, happy place among us? The prophet repeats it because they repeated it upon all occasions. It was the cant of the times, it was in their mouth upon all occasions: If they heard an awakening sermon, if any startling piece of news was brought upon them, they lulled themselves asleep again with this, we cannot but do well, for we have the temple of the Lord among us. Note, The privileges of a form of godliness are oftentimes the pride and confidence of those that are strangers and enemies to the power of it. It is common for those that are farthest from God, to boast themselves most of their being near to the church. They are haughty because of the holy mountain, *Zeph. iii. 11.* as if God's mercy were so tied to them that they might defy his justice.

Now to convince them what a frivolous plea this was, and what little stead it would stand them in.

1. He shews them the gross absurdity of it in itself. If they knew any thing either of the temple of the Lord, or of the Lord of the temple, they must think that to plead that either in excuse of their sin against God, or in arrest of God's judgment against them, was the most ridiculous, unreasonable thing that could be.

(1.) God is a holy God, but this plea made him the patron of sin, of the worst of sins, which even the light of nature condemns, *ver. 9, 10.* What (saith he) will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, be guilty of the vilest immoralities, and which the common interest, as well as the common sense of mankind witness against? Will you swear falsely, a crime which all nations (who with the belief of a God have had a veneration for an oath) have always had a horror of? Will you burn incense to Baal, a dunghill deity that sets up as a rival with the great Jehovah; and not content with that will you walk after other gods too whom ye know not, and by all these crimes put a daring affront upon God, both as the Lord of hosts, and the God of Israel? Will you exchange a God whose power and goodness you have had such a long experience of, for gods whose ability and willingness to help you, you know nothing of? And when you have thus done the worst you can against God, will you brazen your faces so far as to come and stand before him in this house which is called by his name, and in which his name is called upon? Stand before him as servants waiting his commands, as supplicants expecting his favour: Will you act in open rebellion against him, and yet herd yourself among his subjects, among the best of them? By this it should seem you think that either he doth not discover, or doth not dislike your wicked practices, either of which to imagine is to put the highest indignity possible upon him. It is as if you should say, we are delivered to do all these abominations. If they had not the front to say this, *totidem verbis*, yet their actions spoke it aloud. They could not but own that God, even their own God, had many a time delivered them, and been a present help to them, when otherwise they must have perished. He in delivering them designed to reduce them to himself, and by his goodness to lead them to repentance; but they resolved to persist in their abominations notwithstanding; as soon as they were delivered (as of old in the days of the Judges) they did evil again in the sight of the Lord; which was in effect to say, in direct contradiction to the true intent and meaning of the providences which had been concerning them, that God had delivered them to put them again into a capacity of rebelling against him, by sacrificing the more profusely to their idols. Note, Those who continue in sin because grace has abounded, or that grace may abound, do in effect make Christ the minister of sin. Some take it thus? you present yourselves before God with your sacrifices and sin-offerings, and then say, we are delivered, i. e. we are discharged from our guilt, now it shall do us no hurt; when all this is but to blind the world, and stop the mouth of conscience, that you may the more easily to yourselves, and the more probably before others, do all these abominations.

(2.) His temple was a holy place, but this plea made it a protection to the most unholy persons; Is this house which is called by my name, and is a standing sign of God's kingdom, set up among men in opposition to the kingdom of sin and Satan; Is this become a den of robbers in your eyes? Do you think it

was built to be not only a rendezvous of, but a refuge and shelter to the vilest of malefactors? No, though the horns of the altar were a sanctuary to him that slew a man at unawares, yet not to a wilful murderer, nor to one that doth ought presumptuously, *Exod. xxi. 14. 1 Kings ii. 29.* Those that think to excuse themselves in unchristian practices with the Christian name, and sin the more boldly and securely because there is a sin-offering provided, do in effect make God's house of prayer a den of thieves; as the priests in Christ's time, *Matt. xxi. 13.* But could they thus impose upon God? No, Behold, I have seen it, saith the Lord, have seen the real iniquity through the counterfeit and dissembled piety. Note, Though men may deceive one another with the shews of devotion, yet they cannot deceive God.

2. He shews them the insufficiency of this plea adjudged long since in the case of Shiloh.

1. It is certain Shiloh was ruined, though it had God's sanctuary in it, when by its wickedness it profaned that sanctuary, *ver. 12. Go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh;* it is probable the ruins of that once flourishing city were yet remaining, however they might read the history of it, which ought to affect them as if they saw the place: there God set his name at the first; there the tabernacle was set up when Israel first took possession of Canaan; *Josh. xvii. 1.* and thither the tribes went up; but those that attended the service of the tabernacle there, corrupted both themselves and others, and from them arose the wickedness of his people Israel: that fountain was poisoned, and sent forth malignant streams: and what came of it? go, see what God did to it? Was it protected by its having the tabernacle in it? No, God forsook it, *Psal. lxxviii. 60.* sent his ark into captivity, cut off the house of Eli that presided there; and it is very probable the city was quite destroyed, for we never read any more of it but as a monument of divine vengeance upon holy places when they harbour wicked people. Note, God's judgments upon others that have really revolted from God, while they have kept up a profession of nearness to him, should be a warning to us not to trust in lying words. It is good to consult precedents, and make use of them; Remember Lot's wife; remember Shiloh, and the seven churches of Asia, and know that the ark and candlestick are moveable things, *Rev. ii. 5. Matt. xxi. 43.*

2. It is as certain that Shiloh's fate will be Jerusalem's doom, if a speedy and sincere repentance prevent it not. (1.) Jerusalem was as sinful as ever Shiloh was; that is proved by the unerring testimony of God himself against them, *ver. 13. Ye have done all these works,* you cannot deny it: and they continued obstinate in their sin; that is proved by the testimony of God's messengers, by whom he spake unto them to return and repent, rising up early and speaking, as one in earnest, as one in earnest, as one that would lose no time in dealing with them; nay, that should take the fittest opportunity for speaking to them early in the morning, when if ever they were sober, and had their thoughts free and clear: but it was all in vain, God spake, but they heard not, i. e. they heeded not, they never minded; he called them, but they answered not: they would not come at his call. Note, What God hath spoken to us, greatly aggravates what we have done against him.

2. Jerusalem shall shortly be as miserable as ever Shiloh was: Therefore I will do unto this house as I did to Shiloh, ruin it, and lay it waste, *ver. 14.* Those that tread in the steps of the wickedness of those that went before them, must expect to fall by the like judgments, for all these things happened to them for ensamples. The temple at Jerusalem, though never so strongly built, if wickedness were found in it, would be as unable to keep its ground, and as easily conquered as even the tabernacle in Shiloh was, when God's day of vengeance was come. This house (saith God) is called by my name, and therefore you may think I should protect it: it is the house in which you trust, and you think it will protect you: this land is the place, this city the place which I gave to you and your fathers, and therefore you are secure of the continuance of it, and think nothing can turn you out of it: but the men of Shiloh thus flattered themselves, and did but deceive themselves. He quotes another precedent, *ver. 15.* viz. the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were the seed of Abraham, and had the covenant of circumcision, and possessed the land which God gave to them and their fathers, and yet their idolatries threw them, and extirpated them; and can you think but that the same evil courses should be as fatal to you? Doubtless they will be so, for God is uniform, and of a piece with himself in his judicial proceedings. It is a rule of justice, *ut parium pur sit ratio*, You have corrupted yourselves as your brethren the seed of Ephraim did, and are become their brethren in iniquity, and therefore I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast them. The interpretation here given of the judgment, makes it a terrible one indeed; the casting of them out of their land signified God's casting them out of his sight, as if he would never look upon them, never look after them more. Whenever we are cast it is well enough, if we be kept in the love of God; but if we are thrown out of his favour, our case is miserable though we dwell in our own land. This threatening, that God would make this house like Shiloh, we shall meet with again, and find Jeremiah indicted for it, *chap. xxvi. 6.*

16. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee. 17. Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18. The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the woman knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. 19. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? 20. Therefore thus saith the LORD God; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon the place; upon man and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

God had shewed them in the foregoing verses, that the temple, and the service of it, of which they boasted, and in which they trusted, should not avail to prevent the judgment threatened. But there was another thing which might stand them in some stead, and which yet they had no value for, and that was the prophet's intercession for them: his prayer would do them more good than their own pleas; now here that support is taken from them; and their case is sad indeed, that have lost their interest in the prayers of God's ministers and people.

1. God here forbids the prophet to pray for them, *ver. 16.* The decree

is gone forth, the ruin is resolved on, therefore *pray not thou for this people*, i. e. Pray not for the preventing of this judgment threatened, they have *sinned unto death*, and therefore pray not for their life, but for the life of their souls, 1 John v. 16. See here, (1.) That God's prophets are *praying* men; Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, and yet prayed for their preservation, not knowing that the decree was *absolute*, and it is the will of God that we *pray for the peace of Jerusalem*. Even when we threaten sinners with damnation, we must pray for their salvation, that they may *turn and live*. Jeremiah was hated, and persecuted, and reproached by the children of his people, and yet he prayed for them; for it becomes us to render good for evil. (2.) That God's praying prophets have a great interest in heaven, how little soever they have on earth. When God was determined to destroy this people, he bespeaks the prophet not to pray for them, because he would not have his prayers *to lie*, as prophets' prayers seldom did, *unanswered*: God said to Moses, *Let me alone*, Exod. xxxii. 10. (3.) It is an ill omen to a people, when God restrains the spirits of his ministers and people from praying for them, and gives them to see their case so desperate, that they have no heart to speak a good word for them. (4.) Those that will not regard good ministers preaching, cannot expect any benefit by their praying. If you will not hear us when we speak from God to you, God will not hear us when we speak to him for you.

2. He gives him a reason for this prohibition. Praying breath is too precious a thing to be lost and thrown away upon a people hardened in sin and marked for ruin.

1. They are resolved to *persist* in their rebellion against God, and will not be *turned back* by the prophet's preaching: for this he appeals to the prophet himself, and his own inspection and observation, *ver. 17. Seest thou not what they do openly and publicly*; without either shame or fear, *in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem*: this intimates both that the sin was *evident*, and could not be *denied*, and that the sinners were *impudent*, and would not be *reclaimed*; they committed their wickedness even in the prophet's presence and under his eyes; he saw what they did and yet they did it, which was an affront to his office, and to him whose officer he was, and bid defiance to both.

Now observe, (1.) What the sin is with which they are here charged; it is idolatry, *ver. 18*. Their idolatrous respects are paid to the *queen of heaven*, the moon, either in an image, or in the original, or both: they worshipped it probably under the name of *Astartoth*, or some other of their goddesses, being in love with the brightness in which they saw the moon walk, and thinking themselves indebted to her for her benign influences, or fearing her malignant ones; *Job xxxi. 26*. The worshipping of the moon was much in use among the heathen nations, *Jer. xlv. 17—19*. Some read it the *frame or workmanship* of heaven; the whole celestial globe with all its ornaments and powers was the object of their adoration. They worshipped the *host of heaven*, Acts vii. 41. The homage they should have paid to their prince, they paid to the statues that beautified the frontispiece of his palace; worshipped the creatures instead of him that made them, the servants instead of him that commands them, and the gifts instead of him that gave them. With the *queen of heaven* they worshipped *other gods*, images of things not only in heaven above, but in earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth; for those that forsake the true God wander *endlessly* after false ones. To these deities of their own making they offer *cakes* for meat-offerings, and *pour out drink-offerings*, as if they had their meat and drink from them, and were obliged to make to them their acknowledgments; and see how busy they are, and how every hand is employed in the service of these idols, according as they used to be employed in their domestic services. The children were sent to gather wood, the fathers kindled the fire to heat the oven, being of the poorer sort, that could not afford to keep servants to do it, yet they would rather do it themselves than it should be undone; the women kneaded the dough with their own hands, for perhaps though they had servants to do it, yet they took a pride in shewing their zeal for their idols by doing it themselves. Let us be instructed even by this bad example, in the service of our God. (1.) Let us honour him with our substance, as those that have our subsistence from him, and eat and drink to the glory of him from whom we have our meat and drink. (2.) Let us not decline the *hardest* services, nor disdain to stoop to the *meanest*, by which God may be honoured; for none shall kindle a fire on God's altar for nought, Let us think it an honour to be employed in any work for God. (3.) Let us bring up our children in the acts of devotion: let them, as they are capable, be employed in doing something towards the keeping up of religious exercises.

(2.) What is the direct tendency of this sin; It is that they may *provoke me to anger*, they cannot design any thing else in it: But, *ver. 19. Do they provoke me to anger*? Is it because I am hard to be pleased, or easily provoked? Or am I to bear the blame of their resentment? No, it is their own doing, they may thank themselves, and they alone shall bear it. *Is it against God that they provoke him to wrath*? Is he the worse for it? Doth it do him any real damage? No, *Is it not against themselves*? to the confusion of their own faces? It is malice against God, but it is *impotent* malice, it cannot hurt him; nay, it is *foolish* malice, it will hurt themselves: they flew their spite against God, but they do the spite to themselves. Now canst thou think any other but that such a people should be abandoned, as are thus desperately set upon their own ruin.

2. God is resolved to proceed in his judgments against them, and will not be *turned back* by the prophet's prayers, *ver. 20. Thus saith the Lord God*, and what he saith he will not *unsay*, nor can all the world *gainsay*, hear it therefore, and tremble; *Behold, my anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place*, as the flood of waters was upon the whole world, or the showers of fire and brimstone upon Sodom, since they will anger me, let them see what will come of it. They shall soon find, (1.) That there is no *escaping* this deluge of fire, either by *flying* from it, or *henceing* against it: it shall be poured out on *this place*, though it be a holy place, the Lord's house. It shall reach both *man and beast*, like the plagues of Egypt, and like some of them shall destroy the *trees of the field*, and the *fruit of the ground*, which they had designed and prepared for *Baal*, and of which they had made *cakes to the queen of heaven*. (2.) There is no *extinguishing* it; it shall burn and shall not be quenched; prayers and tears shall then avail nothing; when his wrath is kindled but a little, much more when it is kindled to such a degree there shall be no quenching of it: God's wrath is that fire unquenchable, which eternity itself will not see the period of: *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*.

21. ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. 22. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: 23. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all in the ways

that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. 24. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. 25. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them: 26. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. 27. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them, but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them, but they will not answer thee. 28. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

God having shewed the people that the temple would not protect them while they polluted it with their wickedness, here shews them that their sacrifices would not atone for them, not be accepted while they went on in disobedience. See with what contempt he here speaks of their ceremonial services, *ver. 21. Put your burnt-offerings to your sacrifices*, go in them as long as you please; and one sort of sacrifices to another; turn your burnt-offerings, which were to be wholly burnt to the honour of God, into peace-offerings, which the offerer himself had a considerable share of, that you may eat flesh, for that is all the good you are likely to have from your sacrifices, a good meal's meat or two; but expect not any other benefit by them while you live at this loose rate. *Keep your sacrifices to yourselves* (so some understand it) let them be served up at your own tables, for they are no way acceptable at God's altars. For the opening of this,

1. He shews them that obedience was the only thing he required of them, *ver. 22, 23*. He appeals to the original contract, by which they were first formed into a people, when they were brought out of Egypt: God made them a kingdom of priests to himself, not that he might be regaled with their sacrifices, as the devils, whom the heathen worshipped, which are represented as eating with pleasure the fat of their sacrifices, and drinking the wine of their drink-offerings, *Deut. xxxii. 38*. No, *Will God eat the flesh of bulls*? Psalm i. 13. *I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices*, not of them at first. The precepts of the moral law were given before the ceremonial institutions, and those came afterwards as trials of their obedience, and assistances to their repentance and faith. The Levitical law begins thus: *If any man of you will bring an offering*, he must do so and so, *Lev. i. 2—iii. 1*. as if it were intended rather to regulate sacrifices than to require it: but that which God commanded, which he bound to them by his supreme authority, and which he insisted upon as the condition of the covenant, was, *Obey my voice*, see *Exod. xv. 26*. where this was the statute and the ordinance by which God proved them, *Hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God*. And upon these terms they shall be God's peculiar people, *Exod. xiv. 5. If ye will obey my voice indeed*. Make conscience of the duties of natural religion, observe positive institutions from a principle of obedience: and then, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people*; which speaks the greatest honour, happiness and satisfaction that any of the children of men are capable of. Let your conversation be regular, and in every thing study to comply with the will and word of God; walk within the bounds that I have set you, and in all the ways that I have commanded you, and then you may assure yourselves it shall be well with you. The demand here is very reasonable, that we should be directed by infinite wisdom to that which is fit; that he that made us should command us, and that he should give us law, who gives us our being, and all the supports of it. And the promise is very encouraging; let God's will be your rule, and his favour shall be your felicity.

2. He shews them that disobedience was the only thing for which he had a quarrel with them: *He would not reprove them for their sacrifices*, for the omission of them, they had been continually before him, Psalm i. 8. with them they hoped to bribe God, and purchase a licence to go on in sin. That therefore which God had all along laid to their charge, was breaking his commandments in the course of their conversation; while they observed them in some instances in the course of their devotion, *ver. 24, 25, &c.*

1. They set up their own will in competition with the will of God. They hearkened not to God and to his law, they never heeded that, it was to them as if they had never been given, or were of no force: they inclined not their ears to attend to it, much less their hearts to comply with it. But they would have their own way, would do as they had a mind, and not as they were bidden: Their own counsels were their guide, and not the dictates of divine wisdom; that shall be lawful and good with them which they think so, though the word of God saith quite contrary. The imagination of their evil heart, the appetites and passions of it shall be a law to them, and they will walk in the way of it, and in the sight of their eyes.

2. If they began well, yet they did not proceed, but soon flew off. They went backward, when they talked of making a captain, and returning to Egypt again, and would not go forward under God's conduct. They promised fair, *All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do*: and if they would but have kept in that good mind all had been well; but instead of going on in the way of duty, they drew back into the way of sin, and were worse than ever.

3. When God sent to them by word of mouth to put them in mind of the written word, which was the business of the prophets, it was all one, still they were disobedient. God had servants of his among them in every age, since they came out of Egypt unto this day, some or other to tell them of their faults, and put them in mind of their duty, whom he rose up early to send, as before, *ver. 13*. as men rise up early to call servants to their work; but they were as deaf to the prophets as they were to the law, *ver. 26. Yet they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear*. This had been their way and manner all along; they were of the same stubborn, refractory disposition with those that went before them: it had all along been the genius of the nation, and an evil genius it was, that continually haunted them till it ruined them at last.

4. Their practice and character was still the same, they were worse and not better than their fathers.

1. Jeremiah can himself witness against them, that they were disobedient, or he shall soon find it so, *ver. 27. Thou shalt speak all these words to them*, shalt particularly charge them with disobedience and obduracy; but even that will not work upon them, they will not hearken to thee, nor heed thee; thou shalt go and call to them, with all the plainness and earnestness imaginable, but they will not answer thee, they will either give thee no answer at all, or not an obedient answer; they will not come at thy call.

2. He must therefore own that they deserved the character of a *disobedient people* that were ripe for destruction, and must go to them and tell them so to their faces, *ver. 28. Say unto them, This is a nation that obeys not the voice of the Lord their God; they are notorious for their obstinacy; they sacrifice to the Lord as their God, but they will not be ruled by him as their God: they will not receive either the instruction of his word or the correction of his rod, they will not be reclaimed or reformed by either; truth is perished among them, they cannot receive it, they will not submit to it, nor be governed by it: they will not speak truth, there is no believing a word they say, for it is cut off from their mouth, and lying comes in the room of it; they are false both to God and man.*

29. ¶ Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. 30. For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. 31. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. 32. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. 33. And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. 34. Then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

Here is, 1. A loud call to weeping and mourning. Jerusalem, that had been a joyous city, the city of the whole earth, must now take up a lamentation on high places, *ver. 29. the high places* where they had served their idols, there must they now bewail their misery. In token both of sorrow and slavery, Jerusalem must now cut off her hair, and cast it away; the word is peculiar to the hair of the Nazarites, which was the badge and token of their dedication to God, and it is called *their crown*. Jerusalem had been a city that was a Nazarite to God, but now must cut off her hair; must be profaned, degraded and separated from God, as she had been separated to him. And it is time for those that have lost their holiness to lay aside their joy.

2. Just cause given for this great lamentation.

1. The sin of Jerusalem appears here very heinous, no where worse, or more exceeding sinful. The children of Judah, God's professing people, that came forth out of the waters of Judah, *Isa. xlviii. 1. have done evil in my sight, under my eye, in my presence, they have affronted me to my face, which very much aggravates the affront: or they have done that which they know to be evil in my sight, and in the highest degree offensive to me. Idolatry was the sin which was above all other sins evil in God's sight. Now here are two things charged upon them in their idolatry, which were very provoking,*

(1.) That they were very impudent in it towards God, and set him at defiance, *ver. 30. They have set their abominations, i. e. their abominable idols, and the altars erected to them, in the house that is called by my name, in the very courts of the temple, to pollute it? Manasseh did so, 2 Kings xxi. 7.—xxiii. 12. As if they thought God would connive at it, or cared not though he was never so much displeased with it; or as if they would reconcile heaven and hell, God and Baal. The heart is the place which God has chosen to put his name there; if sin have the innermost and uppermost place there, we pollute the temple of the Lord, and therefore he resents nothing more than setting up idols in their hearts, Ezek. xvi. 4.*

(2.) That they were very barbarous in it towards their own children, *ver. 31. They have particularly built the high places of Tophet, where the image of Moloch was set up, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, near adjoining to Jerusalem, and there they burned their sons and their daughters in the fire; burned them alive, killed them, and killed them in the most cruel manner imaginable, to honour or appease those idols that were devils, and not gods. This was sure the greatest instance that ever was of the power of Satan in the children of disobedience, and of the degeneracy not corruption of the human nature: one would willingly hope there were not many instances of such a barbarous idolatry, but it is amazing there should be any: that men could be so perfectly void of natural affection, as to do a thing so inhuman, as to burn little innocent children, and their own too: that they should be so perfectly void of natural religion, as to think it lawful to do this; nay, to think it acceptable; surely it was in a way of righteous judgment, because they had changed the glory of God into the similitude of a beast, that God gave them up to such vile affections as changed them into worse than beasts. God saith of this, it was what he commanded them not, neither came it into his heart, what is not meant of his not commanding them thus to worship Moloch; that is, it was what he had forbidden them; but he had never commanded that his worshippers should be at such an expence, nor put such a force upon their natural affection in honouring him: it never came into his heart to have children offered to him; yet they had forsaken his service for the service of such gods, as by commanding this, shewed themselves indeed to be enemies to mankind.*

2. The destruction of Jerusalem appears here very terrible; that speaks misery enough in general, *ver. 29. The Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.* Sin makes those the generation of God's wrath, that had been the generation of his love. And God will reject and quite forsake them, who have thus by their impenitency made themselves vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. He will disown them for his; verily, I say unto you, I know you not: and he will give them up to the errors of their own guilt, and leave them in those hands.

1. Death shall triumph over them, *ver. 32, 33.* Sin reigns unto death, for that is the wages of it, the end of those things. Tophet, the valley adjoining to Jerusalem, shall be called the valley of slaughter, for there multitudes shall be slain, when in their sallies out of the city, and their attempts to escape, they fall into the hands of the besiegers. Or, the valley of the slaughtered ones, because thither the corps of those that are slain shall be brought

to be buried, all other burying-places being full. And there they shall bury until there be no more place to make a grave. This speaks the multitude of those that shall die by the sword, pestilence and famine; death shall ride on prosperously with a dreadful pomp and power, conquering and to conquer. The slain of the Lord shall be many. This valley of Tophet was a place where the citizens of Jerusalem walked to take the air; but it shall now be spoiled for that use, for it shall be so full of graves that there shall be no walking there, because of the danger of contracting a ceremonial pollution by the touch of a grave. There it was that they sacrificed some of their children, and dedicated others to Moloch, and there they should fall as victims to divine justice. Tophet had formerly been the burying-place, or burning-place of the dead bodies of the besiegers, when the Assyrian army was routed by an angel; and for this it was ordained of old, *Isa. xxx. 33.* But they have forgot this mercy, and made it the place of their sin, God will now turn it into a burying-place for the besieged. In allusion to this valley, hell is called in the New Testament Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom, for there were buried both the invading Assyrians, and the revolting Jews: so hell is a receptacle after death both for infidels and hypocrites, the open enemies of God's church, and its treacherous friends, it is the congregation of the dead; it is prepared for the generation of God's wrath. But so great shall that slaughter be, that even the spacious valley of Tophet shall not be able to contain the slain; and at length there shall not be enough left alive to bury the dead, so that the carcases of this people shall be meat for the birds and beasts of prey, that shall feed upon them like carrion; and none shall have the concern or courage to frighten them away, as Rizpah did from the dead bodies of Saul's sons, *2 Sam. xxi. 10.* This was according to the threatening in the law, and a branch of the curse, *Deut. xxviii. 26. Thy carcase shall be meat to fowls and beasts, and no man shall fray them away.* Thus do the law and the prophets agree, and the execution with both. The decent burying of the dead is a piece of humanity, in remembrance of what the dead body hath been, the tabernacle of a reasonable soul. Nay, it is a piece of divinity in expectation of what the dead body shall be at the resurrection: the want of it has sometimes been an instance of the rage of men against God's witnesses, *Rev. xi. 9.* Here it is threatened as an instance of the wrath of God against his enemies, and is an intimation, that evil pursues sinners even after death.

2. Joy shall depart from them, *ver. 34. Then will I cause to cease the voice of mirth.* God had called by his prophets, and by lesser judgments to weeping and mourning, but they walked contrary to him, and would hear of nothing but joy and gladness, *Isa. xxii. 12, 13.* And what came of it? Now God called to lamentation, *ver. 29.* And he made his call effectual, leaving them neither cause nor heart for joy and gladness. They that will not weep, shall weep; that will not by the grace of God be cured of their vain mirth, shall by the justice of God be deprived of all mirth: for when God judgeth he will overcome. It is threatened here that there shall be nothing to rejoice in; there shall be none of the joy of weddings; no mirth, for there shall be no marriages: the comforts of life shall be abandoned, and all care to keep up mankind upon earth cast off; there shall be none of the voice of the bridegroom and the bride, no music, no nuptial songs: nor shall there be any more of the joy of harvest; for the land shall be desolate, uncultivated and unimproved: both the cities of Judah, and the streets of Jerusalem, shall look thus melancholy: and when they thus look about them, and see no cause to rejoice, no marvel if they retire into themselves, and find no heart to rejoice. Note, God can soon mar the mouth of the most jovial, and make it to cease, which is a reason why we should always rejoice with trembling: be merry and wise.

C H A P. VIII.

The prophet proceeds in this chapter both to magnify and justify the destruction that God was bringing upon this people: to shew how grievous it would be, and yet how righteous. (1.) He represents the judgments coming so very terrible, that death should appear so as must to be dreaded and yet should be desired, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) He aggravates the wretched stupidity and wilfulness of this people, as that which brought this ruin upon them, *ver. 4—12.* (3.) He describes the great confusion and consternation that the whole land should be in upon the alarm of it, *ver. 13—17.* (4.) The prophet is himself deeply affected with it, and lays it very much to heart, *ver. 18—22.*

1. **A**T that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: 2. And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have fought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried: they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. 3. And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

These verses might fitly have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, as giving a farther description of the dreadful desolation which the army of the Chaldeans should make in the land. It shall strangely alter the property of death itself, and for the worse too.

1. Death shall not now be as it always used to be, the repose of the dead. When Job makes his court to the grave, it is in hope of this, that there he shall rest with kings and counsellors of the earth; but now the ashes of the dead, even of kings and princes, shall be disturbed, and their bones scattered at the grave's mouth, *Psal. cxli. 7.* It was threatened at the close of the former chapter, that the slain should be unburied; that might be through neglect, and was not so strange; but here we find the graves of those that were buried, industriously and maliciously opened by the victorious enemy; who, either for covetousness in hopes to find treasure in the graves, or for spite to the nation, and in a rage against it, brought out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the princes. The dignity of their sepulchres could not secure them, nay, did the more expose them to be rifled; but it was base and barbarous thus to trample upon royal dust. We will hope the bones of good Josiah were not disturbed, because he piously protected the bones of the man of God, when he burnt the bones of the idolatrous priests, *2 Kings xxiii. 18.* The bones of the priests and prophets too were dug up and thrown

thrown about. Some think the false prophets, and the idol priests. God put this mark of ignominy upon them: but if they were God's prophets and his priests, it is what the Psalmist complains of, as the fruit of the outrage of their enemies, *Psalm lxxix. 1, 2.* Nay, those of the spiteful Chaldeans that could not reach to violate the sepulchres of princes and priests, would rather play at small game than sit out; and therefore pulled the bones of the ordinary inhabitants of Jerusalem out of their graves. The barbarous nations were sometimes guilty of these absurd and inhuman triumphs over those they had conquered; and God permitted it here, for a mark of his displeasure against the generation of his wrath, and for a terror to those that survived. The bones being digged out of the graves, were spread abroad upon the face of the earth in contempt, and to make the reproach the more spreading and lasting. They spread them to be dried, that they might carry them about in triumph, or might make fuel of them, or make some superstitious use of them. They shall be spread before the sun; for they shall not be ashamed openly to avow the fact at noon day: and before the moon and stars, even all the host of heaven, whom they have made idols of, *ver. 2.* From the mention of the sun, moon and stars, which should be the unconcerned spectators of this tragedy, the prophet takes occasion to shew how they idolized them, and paid those respects to them, which they should have paid to God only; that it might be observed how little they got by worshipping the creature; for the creatures they worshipped, when they were in distress, saw it, but regarded it not, nor gave them any relief; but were rather pleased to see those abused in being vilified, by whom they had been abused in being deified. See how their respects to their idols are instanced in and enumerated, to shew how we ought to carry it towards our God. (1.) They loved them; as amiable beings and bountiful benefactors, they esteemed them, and delighted in them, and therefore did all that follows to them. (2.) They served them, did all they could in honour of them, and thought nothing too much they could do; they conformed to all the laws of their superstition without disputing. (3.) They walked after them, strove to imitate and resemble them, according to the characters and accounts of them they had received; which gave rise and countenance to much of the abominable wickedness of the heathen. (4.) They sought them, consulted them as oracles, appealed to them as judges, implored their favour, and prayed to them as their benefactors. (5.) They worshipped them, gave them divine honours, as having a sovereign dominion over them. Before these lights of heaven, whom they had courted, shall their dead bodies be cast, and left to putrify, and to be as dung upon the face of the earth; and the sun's shining upon them will but make them the more noisome and offensive. Whatever we make a god of, but the true God only, it will stand us in no stead on the other side death and the grave, not for the body, much less for the soul.

2. Death shall now be what it never used to be, the choice of the living; not because there appears in it any thing delightful: on the contrary, death never appeared in more horrid, frightful shapes than now, when they cannot promise themselves either a comfortable death or a human burial; and yet every thing in this world shall become so irksome, and all the prospects so black and dismal, that death shall be chosen rather than life, *ver. 3.* not in a believing hope of happiness in the other life, but in an utter despair of any ease in this life. The nation is now reduced to a family, so small is the residue of those that remain in it; and it is an evil family, still as bad as ever, their hearts unhumiliated, and their lusts unmortified: they remain alive, and that is all, in the many places whither they were driven by the judgments of God; some prisoners in the country of their enemies, others beggars in their neighbours' country, and others fugitives and vagabonds there and in their own country. And though those that died, died very miserably, yet those that survived, and were thus driven out, should live yet more miserably; so that they should choose death, rather than life, and wish a thousand times that they had fallen with them that fell by the sword. Let this cure us of the inordinate love of life, that the curse may be such, that it may become a burden and terror, and we may be strongly tempted to choose strangling and death rather.

4. ¶ Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away and not return? 5. Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. 6. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into battle. 7. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD. 8. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. 9. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them; 10. Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. 11. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. 12. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

The prophet is here instructed to set before this people the folly of their impenitency, which was it that brought this ruin upon them. They are here represented as the most stupid, senseless people in the world, that would not be made wise by all the methods that infinite wisdom took to bring them to themselves and their right mind, and so to prevent the ruin that was coming upon them.

1. They would not attend to the dictates of reason; they would not act in the affairs of their souls with the same common prudence with which

they acted in other things. Sinners would become saints, if they would but shew themselves men; and religion would soon rule them, if right reason might. Observe it here; Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, *ver. 45.* Shall man fall and not arise? If men happen to fall to the ground, to fall into the dirt, will they not get up again as fast as they can? They are not such fools as to lie still when they are down. Shall a man turn aside out of the right way? Yes, it is possible the most careful traveller may miss his way; but then as soon as he is aware of it, will he not return? Yes, certainly, he will with all speed, and will thank him that shewed him his mistake. Thus men do in other things; why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? Why do not they when they are fallen into sin, hasten to get up again by repentance? Why do not they, when they see they have missed their way, correct their error and reform? No man in his wits will go on in a way that he knows will never bring him to his journey's end; why then is this people sliding back by a perpetual backsliding? See the nature of sin, it is a backsliding, it is going back from the right way: not only into a by-path, but into a contrary path; back from the way which leads to life, to that which leads to utter destruction. And this backsliding, if almighty grace do not interpose to prevent it, will be a perpetual backsliding; the sinner not only wanders endlessly, but proceeds end-ways towards ruin. The same subtlety of the temper that brings men to sin, holds them fast in it; and they contribute to their own captivity, they hold fast deceit. Sin is a great cheat, and they hold it fast, they love it dearly, and refuse to stick to it, and baffle all the methods God takes to part between them and their sins. The excuses they make for their sins are deceits, and so are all their hopes of impunity, yet they hold fast these, and will not be undeceived, and therefore they refuse to return. Note, There is some deceit or other which those hold fast that go on wilfully in sinful ways: some lie in their right hand, by which they keep hold of their sins.

2. They would not attend to the dictates of conscience, which is our reason reflecting upon ourselves, and our own actions, *ver. 6.* Observe, (1.) What expectations there were from them, that they would bethink themselves; I hearkened and heard. The prophet listened to see what effect his preaching had upon them; God himself listened, as one that desires not the death of sinners, that would have been glad to hear any thing that promised repentance, that would certainly have heard it if there had been any thing said of that tendency, and would soon have answered it with comfort, as he did David when he said, I will confess, *Psalm xxxii. 5.* God looks upon men, when they have done amiss, *Job xxxiii. 27.* to see what they will do next; he hearkens and hears. (2.) How these expectations were disappointed; they speak not aright, as I thought they would have done. They did not only not do right, but not so much as speak right; God could not get a good word from them, nothing on which to ground any favour to them, or hopes concerning them. There was none of them that spake aright, none that repented him of his wickedness. Those that have sinned, then, and then only speak aright, when they speak of repenting; and it is sad when those that have made so much work for repentance, do not say a word of repenting. God did not only not find any repenting of the national wickedness, and so helping to empty the measure of public guilt; but none repented of that particular wickedness which he knew himself guilty of. (1.) They did not so much as take the first step towards repentance; they did not so much as say, What have I done? There was no motion towards it, not the least sign or token of it. Note, True repentance begins in a serious and impartial enquiry into ourselves, what we have done, arising from a conviction that we have done amiss. (2.) They were so far from repenting of their sins, that they went on resolutely in their sins; Every one turned to his course, his wicked course, that course of sin which he had chosen and accustomed himself to, as the horse rusheth into battle, eager upon action, and scorned to be curbed. How the horse rusheth into the battle, is elegantly described, *Job xxxix. 21, &c.* He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted. Thus the daring sinner laughs at the threatenings of the word as bugbears, and runs violently upon the instruments of death and slaughter, and nothing will be restrained from him.

3. They would not attend to the dictates of providence, nor understand the voice of God in them, *ver. 7.* (1.) It is an instance of their sottishness, that though they are God's people, and therefore should readily understand his mind upon every intimation of it, yet they know not the judgment of the Lord, they apprehend not the meaning either of a mercy or of an affliction, not how to accommodate themselves to either, or answer God's intention in either. They know not how to improve the seasons of grace that God affords them when he sends them his prophets; nor how to make use of the rebukes they are under, when his voice cries in the city. They discern not the signs of the times, *Matt. xvi. 3.* nor are aware how God is dealing with them. They know not that way of duty, which God had prescribed them, though it be written both in their hearts and in their books. (2.) It is an aggravation of their sottishness, that there is so much sagacity in the inferior creatures. The stork in the heaven knows her appointed times of coming and continuing; so do other season birds, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow; these by a natural instinct change their quarters, as the temper of the air alters; they come when the spring comes, and are gone we know not whither, when the winter approacheth; probably into warmer climates, as some birds come with winter, and are gone when it is over.

4. They would not attend to the dictates of the written word. They say we are wise, but how can they say so? With what face can they pretend to any thing of wisdom, when they do not understand themselves so well as the brute creatures? Why, truly they think they are wise, because the law of the Lord is with them, the book of the law and the interpreters of it; and their neighbours for the same reason conclude they are wise, *Deut. iv. 6.* But their pretensions are groundless, for all this, Lo, certainly in vain made he it; sure never any people had Bibles to so little purpose as they have. They had as good have been without the law, unless they had made a better use of it. God has indeed made it able to make men wise to salvation, but as to them it is made so in vain, for they are never the wiser for it; the pen of the scribes, of those that first wrote the law, and of those that now write explications of it, they are in vain. Both the favour of their God, and the labour of their scribes, is lost upon them, they receive the grace of God therein in vain. Note, There are many that enjoy abundance of the means of grace, that have great plenty of Bibles and ministers, but they have them in vain; they do not answer the end of their having them. But it might be said, they have some wiser men among them, to whom the law and the pen of the scribes is not in vain: To this it is answered, *ver. 9.* The wise men are ashamed, i. e. they have reason to be so, that they have not made a better use of their wisdom, and lived more up to it: They are confounded and taken; all their wisdom has not served to keep them from those courses that tend to their ruin: They are taken in the same snares that others of their neighbours, who have not pretended to so much wisdom, are taken in, and filled with the same confusion. Those that have more knowledge than others, and yet do no better than others for their own souls, have reason to be ashamed. They talk of their wisdom, but Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; they would not be governed by it, would not follow the conduct of it, would not do what they knew, and then what wisdom is in them? None to any purpose; none that would

be found to their praise at the great day, how much soever it is found to their pride now.

The pretenders to wisdom, that said, *we are wise*, and the law of the Lord is with us, were the *priests* and the *false prophets*; with them the prophet here deals plainly.

(1.) He threatens the judgments of God against them. Their families and estates shall be ruined, *ver. 10. Their wives shall be given to others*, when they are taken captives, and *their fields* shall be taken from them by the victorious enemy, and shall be given to *those that shall inherit them*; not only strip them for once, but take possession of them as their own, and acquire a property in them, which they shall transmit to their posterity. And, *ver. 12. notwithstanding all their pretensions to wisdom and sanctity, they fall among them that fall*; for if the blind lead the blind both shall fall together into the ditch. In the time of their visitation, when the wickedness of the land comes to be enquired into, it will be found that they have contributed to it more than any, and therefore they shall be sure to be cast down and cast out.

(2.) He gives a reason for their judgments, *ver. 10, 11, 12. even the same account of their badness which we met with before, chap. vi. 13, 14, 15. where it was opened at large.* (1.) They were greedy of the wealth of this world; which is bad enough in any, but worst in *prophets and priests*, who should be best acquainted with another world, and therefore should be most dead to this. But these from the least to the greatest were *given to covetousness*: The *priests teach for hire*, and the *prophets divine for money*, Micah iii. 11. (2.) They made no conscience of speaking truth, no not when they spake as priests and prophets; *Every one deals falsely*, looks one way and rows another. There is no such thing as sincerity among them. (3.) They flattered people in their sins, and so flattered them into destruction. They pretended to be the physicians of the state, but knew not how to apply proper remedies to its growing maladies; they *healed them slightly*, killed the patient with palliative cures; silencing their fears and complaints with *peace, peace*, all is well, and there is no danger; when the God of heaven was proceeding in his controversy with them, so that there could be no peace to them. (4.) When it was made to appear how basely they prevailed, they were not at all ashamed of it, but rather gloried in it, *ver. 12. They could not blush*, so perfectly lost were they to all sense of virtue and honour; when they were convicted of the grossest forgeries, they would justify what they had done, and laugh at those whom they had imposed upon. Such as these were ripe for ruin.

13. ¶ I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: *there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree, and the leaf shall fade, and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.* 14. Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter in to the fenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD. 15. We looked for peace, and no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! 16. The snorting of the horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein. 17. For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD. 18. ¶ When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. 19. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. 21. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. 22. Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered.

In these verses we have,

1. God threatening the destruction of a sinful people. He hath borne long with them, but they are still more and more provoking, and therefore now their ruin is resolved on, *I will surely consume them, ver. 13. consuming I will consume them*, not only surely but utterly consume them; will follow them with one judgment after another, till they are quite consumed; it is a consumption determined, Isa. x. 23.

(1.) They shall be quite stripped of all their comforts, *ver. 13. There shall be no grapes on the vine.* Some understand it as speaking their sin; God came looking for grapes from this vineyard, seeking fruit upon this fig-tree, but he found none, as Isa. v. 2. Luke xiii. 6. nay they had not so much as leaves, Matth. xi. 19. But it is rather to be understood of God's judgments upon them; and may be meant literally, the enemy shall seize the fruits of the earth, shall pluck the grapes and figs for themselves, and beat down the very leaves with them: Or rather figuratively; they shall be deprived of all their comforts, and shall have nothing left them wherewith to make glad their hearts. It is expounded in the last clause, *The things that I have given them shall pass away from them.* Note, God's gifts are upon condition, and revokable upon non-performance of the condition. Mercies abused are forfeited, and it is just with God to take the forfeiture.

(2.) They shall be set upon by all manner of grievances, and surrounded with calamities, *ver. 17. I will send serpents among you*, the Chaldean army, fiery serpents, flying serpents, cockatrices, these shall bite them with their venomous teeth, give them wounds that shall be mortal; and they shall not be charmed, as some serpents used to be with music. These are serpents of another nature, that are not so wrought upon; or they are as the deaf adder, that stops her ear, and will not hear the voice of the charmer. The enemies are so intent upon making slaughter, that it will be to no purpose to speak them fair, or offer any thing to pacify them or mollify them, or bring them to a better temper. No peace with God, therefore none with them.

2. The people sinking into despair under the pressure of those calamities: They that were void of fear, when the trouble was at a distance, and set it at defiance, are void of hope now it breaks in upon them; and have no

heart, either to make head against it, or to bear up under it, *ver. 14. They cannot think themselves safe in the open villages; Why do we sit still here? Let us assemble, and go in a body into the fenced cities*: Though they could expect no other but to be surely cut off there at last, yet not so soon as in the country, and therefore let us go and be silent there; let us attempt nothing, nor so much as make a complaint, for to what purpose? It is not a submissive, but a fallen silence that they here condemn themselves to. Those that are most jovial in their prosperity, commonly despond most, and are most melancholy in trouble.

Now observe what it is that sinks them.

1. They are sensible that God is angry with them. *The Lord our God has put us to silence*, has struck us with astonishment, and given us water of gall to drink, which is both bitter and stupefying, or intoxicating: *Psal. lx. 3. Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment*. We had better sit still, than rise up and fall; better say nothing, than say nothing to the purpose. To what purpose is it to contend with our fate, when God himself is become our enemy, and fights against us; *Because we have sinned against the Lord*, therefore we are brought to this plunge. This may be taken as the language, (1.) Of their indignation: They seem to quarrel with God, as if he had dealt hardly with them, in putting them to silence, not permitting them to speak for themselves, and then telling them, it was because they had sinned against him. Thus men's foolishness perverts their way, and then their hearts fret against the Lord. Or rather, (2.) Of their convictions: At length they begin to see the hand of God lifted up against them, and stretched out in the calamities under which they are now groaning, and to own that they have provoked him to contend with them. Note, Sooner or later God will bring the most obstinate to acknowledge both his providence and his justice, in all the troubles they are brought into; to see and say, both that it is *his hand*, and that *he is righteous*.

2. They are sensible that the enemy is likely to be too hard for them, *ver. 16. They are soon apprehensive that it is to no purpose to make head against such a mighty force*; they and their people are quite dispirited; and when the courage of a nation is gone, their numbers will stand them in little stead. *The snorting of the horses was heard from Dan*, i. e. the report of the formidable strength of their cavalry was soon carried all the nation over, and every body trembled at the sound of the neighing of his steeds; for they are come, and there is no opposing them; they have devoured the land, and all that is in the city: both town and country is laid waste before them, not only the wealth, but the inhabitants of both, *those that dwell therein*. Note, When God appears against us, every thing else that is against us appears very formidable, whereas if he be for us, every thing appears very despicable, Rom. viii. 31.

3. They are disappointed in their expectations of deliverance out of their troubles, as well as when their troubles came they were a surprise to them; and this double disappointment very much aggravated their calamity.

(1.) The trouble came when they little expected it; *ver. 15. We looked for peace*, the continuance of our peace, but no good came, no good news from abroad; we looked for a time of health and prosperity to our nation, but behold trouble, the alarms of war; for as it follows, *ver. 16. the noise of the enemies horses was heard from Dan*. Their false prophets had cried *peace, peace*, to them, which made it the more terrible, when the scene of war opened on a sudden. This complaint will occur again, *chap. xiv. 19.* (2.) The deliverance did not come, when they had long expected it; *ver. 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended*, i. e. there is a great deal of time gone. Harvest and summer are parts of the year, and when they are gone, the year draws towards a conclusion; so the meaning is: One year passeth after another, one campaign after another, and yet our affairs are in as ill a posture as ever they were; no relief comes, nor is any thing done towards it: *We are not saved*. Nay, there is a great deal of opportunity lost, the season of action is over and silt, the summer and harvest are gone and a cold and melancholy winter succeeds. Note, The salvation of God's church and people oftentimes goes on very slowly, and God keeps his people long in the expectation of it for wise and holy ends. Nay, they stand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door, and are not saved, because they are not ready for salvation.

4. They are deceived in those things that were their confidence, and which they thought would have secured their peace to them, *ver. 19. The daughter of my people cries, cries aloud, because of them that dwell in a far country*, because of the foreign enemy that invades them, that comes from a far country to take possession of ours; this occasions the cry: and what is the cry? It is this; *Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?* These were the two things that they had all along buoyed up themselves with, and depended upon: (1.) That they had among them the temple of God, and the tokens of his special presence with them: the common cant was, *Is not the Lord in Zion?* what danger then need we fear; And they held by this when the trouble was breaking in upon them, surely we shall do well enough, for have we not God among us? But when it grew to an extremity, it was an aggravation of their misery that they had thus flattered themselves. (2.) That they had the throne of the house of David: as they had a temple, so they had a monarchy *jure divino*: *Is not Zion's king in her?* And will not Zion's God protect Zion's king and his kingdom? Surely he will; but why does he not? Why (say they) hath Zion neither a God nor a king to stand by her and help her, that she is thus run down and likely to be ruined? This outcry of their's reflects upon God, as if his power and promise were broken or weakened; and therefore he returns an answer to it immediately, *Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images?* They quarrel with God, as if he had dealt unkindly by them in forsaking them, whereas they by their idolatry had driven him from them; they have withdrawn from their allegiance to him, and so have thrown themselves out of his protection. They fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, Isa. viii. 21. when it is their own sin that separates between them and God, Isa. lix. 1. they feared not the Lord, and then what can a king do for them? Hos. x. 3.

5. We have here the prophet himself bewailing the calamity and ruin of his people; for there were more of the lamentations of Jeremiah, than those we find in the book that bears that title. Observe here,

1. How great his griefs were. He was an eye-witness of the desolations of his country, and saw those things which by the spirit of prophecy he had foreseen. In the foresight, much more in the sight of them, he cries out, *My heart is faint in me*, I sink, I die away at the consideration of it, *ver. 18. When I would comfort myself against my sorrow*, I do but labour in vain; nay, every attempt to alleviate the grief, doth but aggravate it. It is our wisdom and duty, under mournful events, to do what we can to comfort ourselves against our sorrow, by suggesting to ourselves such considerations as are proper to allay the grief, and balance the grievance. But sometimes the sorrow is such, that the more it is repressed, the more strongly it recoils. It may sometimes be the case of very good men, as of the prophet here, whose soul refused to be comforted, and fainted at the cordial, *Psal. lxxvii. 2, 3.* He tells, *ver. 21. what was the matter*; it is for the hurt of the daughter of my people, that I am thus hurt; it is for their sin, and the miseries they have brought upon themselves by it; it is for this that I am black, that I look black, that I go in black as mourners do; and

and that *astonishment hath taken hold on me*, so that I know not what to do, nor which way to turn. Note, The miseries of our country ought to be very much the grief of our souls. A gracious spirit will be a public spirit, a tender spirit, a mourning spirit. It becomes us to lament the miseries of our fellow-creatures, much more to lay to heart the calamities of our country, and especially of the church of God, to *grieve for the affliction of Joseph*. Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, and though the truth of his prophecy was questioned, yet he did not rejoice in the proof of the truth of it by the accomplishment of it, preferring the welfare of his country before his own reputation: If Jerusalem had repented and been spared, he would have been far from fretting as Jonah did. Jeremiah had many enemies in Judah and Jerusalem, that hated, and reproached, and persecuted him; and in the judgments brought upon them, God reckoned with them for it, and pleaded his prophets excuse; yet he was far from rejoicing in it, so truly did he forgive his enemies, and desire that God would forgive them.

2. How *small his hopes were*, ver. 22. *Is there no balm in Gilead?* No medicine proper for a sick and dying kingdom? Is there no physician there? No skilful, faithful hand to apply the medicine? He looks upon the case to be *deplorable and past relief*. There is no balm in Gilead, that can cure the disease of sin; no physician there, that can restore the health of a nation quite over-run by such a foreign army as that of the Chaldeans. The desolations made are irreparable, and the disease is presently come to such a height that there is no checking it. Or, this verse may be understood, as laying all the blame of the incurable miseries of their disease upon themselves; and so the question must be answered affirmatively; *Is there no balm in Gilead?* No physician there? Yes, certainly there is; God is able to help and heal them, there is a sufficiency in him to redress all their grievances. Gilead was a place in their own land, not far off; they had among themselves God's law and his prophets, with the help of which they might have been brought to repentance, and their ruin might have been prevented; they had princes and priests, whose business it was to reform the nation and redress their grievances. What could have been done more than has been done for their recovery? *Why then is not their health restored?* Certainly it was not long of God, but of themselves; it was not for want of balm and a physician, but because they would not admit the application, nor submit to the methods of cure. The physician and physic were both ready, but the patient was wilful and irregular; would not be tied to rules, but must be humoured. Note, If sinners die of their wounds, their blood is upon their own heads. The blood of Christ is balm in Gilead, his spirit is the physician there, both sufficient, all-sufficient, so that they might have been healed, but would not.

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter the prophet goes on faithfully to reprove sin, and to threaten God's judgments for it, and yet bitterly to lament both, as one that neither rejoiced at iniquity, nor was glad at calamities. (1.) He here expressed his great grief for the miseries of Judah and Jerusalem, and his detestation of their sins, which brought those miseries upon them, ver. 1—11. (2.) He justifies God in the greatness of the destruction brought upon them, ver. 9—12—16. (3.) He calls upon others to bewail the woeful case of Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 17—22. (4.) He shews them the folly and vanity of trusting in their own strength or wisdom, or the privileges of their circumcision, or any thing but God only, ver. 23—26.

1. **O**H that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! 2. Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. 3. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth: for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me saith the LORD. 4. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with flanders. 5. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: They have taught their tongue to speak lies and weary themselves to commit iniquity. 6. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit: through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD. 7. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? 8. Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait. 9. Shall I not visit them for these things: saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? 10. For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowls of the heavens and the beasts are fled: they are gone. 11. And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons: and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

The prophet being commissioned both to foretell the destruction coming upon Judah and Jerusalem; and to point out the sin for which that destruction was brought upon them, here, as elsewhere, speaks of both very feelingly: what he said of both came from the heart, and therefore one would have thought it should have reached to the heart.

1. He abandons himself to sorrow, in consideration of the calamitous condition of his people, which he sadly laments, as one that preferred Jerusalem before his chief joy, and her grievances before his chief sorrows.

(1.) He laments the slaughter of the persons; the blood shed, and the lives lost, ver. 1. *O that my head were waters*, quite melted and dissolved with grief, that so mine eyes might be *fountains of tears*, weeping abundance continually and without intermission, still sending forth fresh floods of tears, as there still occur fresh occasions for them! The same word in Hebrew signifies both *the eye* and a *fountain*, as if in this land of sorrows our eyes were designed rather for weeping than seeing. Jeremiah wept much, and yet wished he could weep more, that he might affect a stupid people, and rouse them to a due sense of the hand of God gone out against them. Note, It becomes us while we are here in this vale of tears, to conform to the temper of the climate, and to sow in tears. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*, hereafter: but let them expect that while they are here, *the clouds will return after the rain*. While we find our hearts such fountains of sin, it is fit our eyes should be *fountains of tears*. But Jeremiah's grief is here upon the public account; he would weep day and night, not so much for the death of his own near relations, but for the *slain of the daughter of his people*, the multitudes of his countrymen that fell by the sword of war. Note, When we hear of the numbers of the slain in great battles and sieges, we ought to be much affected with it, and not to make a light matter of it; yea, though they be not of the *daughter of our people*, for whatever people they are of, they are of the same human nature with us; and there are so many precious lives lost, as dear to them as our's to us, and so many precious souls gone into eternity.

2. He laments the desolations of the country. This he brings in, ver. 10. (for pillionate mourners do not use to be very methodical in their discourages) not only for the towns and cities, but for the *mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing*, not barren mountains, but the fruitful hills with which Judea abounded: and for the *habitations of the wilderness*, or rather the pastures of the plain, that used to be *clothed with flowers, or covered over with corn*, and a goodly sight it was: but now they are *burnt up* by the Chaldean army; which, according to the custom of war destroyed the forage, and carried off all the cattle; so that *none dares to pass through them*, for fear of meeting with some parties of the enemy; *none cares to pass through them*, every thing looks so melancholy and frightful: none have any business to pass through them, for they hear not the voice of the cattle there as usual, the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen, that grateful music to the owners; nay both the *fowls of the heaven*, and the *beasts are fled*, either frightened away by the rude noises and terrible fires which the enemies make, or forced away because there is no subsistence for them. Note, God has many ways of turning a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. And the havoc war makes in a country, cannot but be a lamentation to all tender spirits, for it is a tragedy which destroys the stage it is acted on.

3. He abandons himself to solitude in consideration of the scandalous character and carriage of his people. Though he dwells in Judah where God is known, in Salem where his tabernacle is, yet he is ready to cry out, *How is me that I sojourn in Mesek*, Psal. cxx. 5. while all his neighbours are fleeing to the defended cities, and Jerusalem especially, in dread of the enemies rage, chap. iv. 5, 6. he is contriving to retire into some desert, in detestation of his people's sin, ver. 2. *O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men*, such a lonely cottage to dwell in as they have in the deserts of Arabia, which are uninhabited, for travellers to repose themselves in, that I may leave my people and go from them! Not only because of the ill usage they gave him, he would rather venture himself among the wild beasts of the desert, than among such treacherous, barbarous people; but rather because his righteous soul was vexed from day to day, as Lot's was in Sodom, with the wickedness of their conversation, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. This doth not speak any intention or resolution he had thus to retire. God had cut him out work among them, which he must not quit for his own ease; we must not go out of the world, as bad as it is, before our time: if he could not reform them, he could bear a testimony against them; if he could not do good to many, yet he might to some: but it speaks a temptation he was in to leave them, and a threatening that they should be deprived of his ministry; and especially the holy indignation he had against their abominable wickedness, notwithstanding all the pains he had taken with them to reclaim them. It made him even weary of his life to see them dishonouring God as they did, and destroying themselves. Time was, when the place which God had chosen to put his name, there was the desire and delight of good men. David in a wilderness longed to be again in the courts of God's house; but now Jeremiah in the courts of God's house (for there he was when he said this) wished himself in a wilderness. Those have made themselves very miserable that have made God's people and ministers weary of them, and willing to get from them.

Now to justify his willingness to leave them, he shews.

1. What he himself had observed among them. He would not think of leaving them because they were poor, and in distress, but because they were wicked.

(1.) They were *filthy*; they be all adulterers, i. e. the generality of them. chap. v. 8. They all either practised this sin, or connived at those that did. Lewdness and uncleanness was that crying sin of Sodom, at which righteous Lot was *vexed in soul*, and it is a sin that renders men loathsome in the eyes of God and all good men; it makes men an abomination.

(2.) They were *false*. This is the sin that is most enlarged upon here; they that had been unfaithful to their God, were so to one another, and it was a part of their punishment as well as their sin, for even those that love to cheat, yet hate to be cheated. (1.) Go into their *solemn meetings*, either for the exercises of religion, or the administration of justice, or for commerce, either to church, court, or exchange, and they are an *assembly of treacherous men*, they are so by consent, they strengthen one another's hands in doing any thing that is *perfidious*. There they will cheat *deliberately and industriously*, with design, with a malicious design, for they bend their tongues like their bow for lies, with a great deal of craft; their tongues are fitted for lying, as a bow that is bent is for shooting; and are as constantly used for that purpose. Their tongue turns as naturally to a lie, as the bow to the string. But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth. Their tongues are like a bow strung, with which they might do good service, if they would use that art and resolution which they are so much masters of in the cause of truth; but they will not do so. They appear not in defence of the truth of God, which were delivered to them by the prophets; but even those that could not deny them to be truths, yet were content to see them run down. In the administration of justice they have not courage to stand by an honest cause that has truth on its side, if greatness and power be on the other side. Those that will be faithful to the truth, must be valiant for it, and not be daunted by the opposition given to it, nor fear the face of man. They are not valiant for the truth in the land, the land which has truth for the glory of it. Truth is fallen in the land, and they dare not lend a hand to help it up, Isa. lix. 14, 15. We must answer another day, not only for our enmity in opposing truth, but our cowardice in defending it. (2.) Go into their families, and you find they will cheat their own brethren, every brother will utterly supplant, they will trip up one another's heels if they can, for they lie at catch to seek all advantages.

vantages against those they hope to make a hand of. Jacob had his name from *supplanting*, it is the word here used; they followed him in his name, but not in his true character, *without guile*. So very false are they, that you cannot *trust in a brother*, but must stand as much upon your guard as if you were dealing with a stranger, with a Canaanite that has *balances of deceit in his hand*. Things are come to an ill pass indeed, when a man cannot put confidence in his own brother. (3.) Go into *company*, and observe both their commerce and their conversation, and you will find there is nothing of sincerity or common honesty among them, *non habes abhospitatus*. The best advice a wife man can give you is, *to take heed every one of his neighbour*, nay of his *friend*, so some read it, of him whom he has befriended, and who pretends friendship to him. No man thinks himself bound either to be *grateful*, or to be *sincere*. Take them in their converse, and *every neighbour will walk with slander*, they care not what ill they say one of another, though never so false; that way that the slander goes they will go; they will *walk with it*. They will *walk about* from house to house too, carrying *slanders* along with them, all the ill-natured stories they can pick up or invent to make mischief. Take them in their trading and bargaining, and *they will deceive every one his neighbour*, will say any thing, though they know it to be false, for their own advantage. Nay, they will lie for lying sake, to keep their tongues in use to it, for *they will not speak the truth*; but will tell a deliberate lie, and laugh at it when they have done.

And that which aggravates the sin of this false and lying generation is, (1.) That they are *ingenious to sin*. They have *taught their tongues to speak lies*; implying, that through the reluctancies of natural conscience they found it difficult to bring themselves to it. Their tongue would have spoke truth, but they *taught it to speak lies*, and by degrees have made themselves masters of the art of lying, and have got such a habit of it, that use has made it a second nature to them. They learned it when they were young, for *the wicked are estranged from the womb, speaking lies*, Psal. lviii. 3. and now they are grown dextrous at it. (2.) That they are *industrious to sin*. They *weary themselves to commit iniquity*: they put a force upon their consciences to bring themselves to it, and *tire out* their consciences by offering them a continual violence; and they take a great deal of pains till they have even *spent themselves* in bringing about their malicious designs. They are *wearyed with their sinful pursuits*, and yet not *weary* of them. The service of sin is a perfect drudgery, men run themselves out of breath in it, and put themselves to a great deal of toil to damn their own souls. (3.) That they grow worse and worse, *ver. 3. They proceed from evil to evil*, from one sin to another, from one degree of sin to another. They began with lesser sins, *nemo repente fit turpissimus*; they began with equivocating and hawking, but at last came to downright lying. And they are now proceeding to greater sins yet, *for they know not me, saith the Lord*. And where men have no knowledge of God, or no consideration of what they have known of him, what good can be expected from them? Men's ignorance of God is the cause of all their ill carriage one towards another.

2. The prophet shews what God had informed him of their wickedness, and what he had determined against them.

(1.) God had *marked their sin*. He could tell the prophet (and he speaks of it with compassion) what sort of people they were that he had to deal with. *I know thy works and where thou dwellest*, Rev. ii. 13. So here, *ver. 6. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit*, i. e. all about thee are addicted to it, therefore stand upon thy guard: if *all men are liars*, it concerns us to *beware of men*, and be *wise as serpents*. They are deceitful men, therefore there is little hopes of thy doing any good among them? for make things never so plain, they have some trick or other wherewith to shun off their convictions. This charge is enlarged upon, *ver. 8. Their tongue was a bow bent*, *ver. 3. plotting and preparing mischief*; here it is *an arrow shot out*, putting in execution what they had projected. It is a *flying arrow*, so some readings of the original have it; their tongue has been to many an instrument of death. They *speak peaceably to their neighbours*, against whom they are at the same time *laying in wait*. As Joab killed Abner when he was about to kill him; and Cain, that he might not be suspected of any ill design, *talked with his brother* freely and familiarly. Note, Fair words, when they are not attended with good intentions, are *deceivable*, but when they are intended as a cloke and cover for wicked intentions they are *abominable*. And while they did all this injury to one another, they put a great contempt upon God, and not only they *know not me*, but, *ver. 6. through deceit*, through the delusions of the false prophets, they *refuse to know me*; they are so cheated into a good opinion of their own ways, the ways of their own heart, that they *desire not the knowledge of God's ways*. Or, they are so wedded to this sinful course they are in, and so bewitched with it, and the gains of that, that they will by no means admit the *knowledge of God*, because that would be a check upon them in their sins. This is the ruin of sinners, they might be taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and they will not learn it. And where no knowledge of God is, what good can be expected? Hos. iv. 1.

2. He had *marked them for ruin*, *ver. 7—9—11*. Those that will not know God as their lawgiver, shall be made to know him as their judge. God determines here to bring his judgments upon them, for the refining of some, and the ruining of the rest.

(1.) Some shall be *refined*, *ver. 7. because they are thus corrupt, Behold I will melt them, and try them*, will bring them into trouble, and see what that will do to bring them to repentance. Whether the furnace of affliction will purify them from their dross? and whether when they are melted they will be new-cast in a better mould? He will make trial of lesser afflictions, before he brings upon them utter destruction, for he *desires not the death of sinners*. They shall not be *rejected as reprobate silver*, till the foundry has melted in vain, chap. vi. 29. 30. For *how shall I do for the daughters of my people?* He speaks as one consulting with himself what to do with them that might be for the best; and as one that could not find in his heart to cast them off, and give them up to ruin, till he had first tried all means likely to bring them to repentance. Or, *how else shall I do for them?* They are grown so very corrupt, that there is no other way with them but to put them into the furnace; what other course can I take with them; Isa. v. 4, 5. It is *the daughter of my people*, and I must do something to vindicate my own honour, which will be reflected upon if I connive at their wickedness; I must do something to reduce and reform them. A parent corrects his own children because they are *his own*. Note, When God afflicts his people, it is with a gracious design to mollify and reduce them; it is but when need is, and when he knows it is the best method he can use.

(2.) The rest shall be ruined, *ver. 9. Shall I not visit for these things?* Fraud and falsehood are sins which God hates, and which he will reckon for. *Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this*, that is so universally corrupt, and by their impudence in sin, even dares and defies divine vengeance? The sentence is passed, the decree is gone forth, *ver. 11. I will make Jerusalem heaps of rubbish, and lay it in such ruins that shall be fit for nothing but to be a den of dragons*. And the cities of Judah shall be a *desolation*. God makes them so, for he gives the enemy warrant and power to do it: but why is the *holy city* made a heap? The answer is ready, because it was become an *unholy one*.

12. ¶ Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land periseth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through? 13. And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; 14. But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: 15. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. 16. I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them. 17. ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come: 18. And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eye-lids gush out with waters. 19. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out, 20. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation. 21. For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. 22. Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcases of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvest-man, and none shall gather them.

Two things the prophet designs in these verses with reference to the approaching destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. (1.) To convince people of the justice of God in it, that they had by sin brought it upon themselves, and that therefore they had no reason to quarrel with God, who *did them no wrong at all*, but a great deal of reason to fall out with their sins, which *did them all this mischief*. (2.) To affect people with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, and the miserable effects of it, that by a terrible prospect of it they might be awakened to repentance and reformation, which was the only way to prevent it, or at least mitigate their own share in it. This being designed.

1. He calls for the *thinking men*, by them to shew people the equity of God's proceedings, though they seemed harsh and severe, *ver. 12. Who, where is the wise man, or the prophet to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken?* You boast of your wisdom, and of the prophets you have among you, produce me any one that has but the free use of human reason, or any acquaintance with divine revelation, and he will soon *understand* this himself, and it will be so clear to him that he will be ready to *declare it* to others, that there is a just ground of God's controversy with his people. Do these *wise men* enquire for what the land periseth? What is the matter that such a change is made with this land? It used to be a land that God *cared for* and he had *his eyes upon it* for good, *Deut. xi. 12*. But it is now a land that he has forsaken, and that his face is against it: it used to *flourish* as a garden of the Lord, and to be *replenished* with inhabitants, but now it is burnt up like a wilderness, that *none passeth through it*, much less cares to settle in it. It was supposed long ago that it would be asked when it came to this, *Wherefore has the Lord done thus unto this land?* What means the heat of this great anger? *Deut. xxix. 24*. To which question God here gives a full answer, before which all flesh must be silent. He produceth out of the record.

(1.) The indictment preferred and proved against them, upon which they had been found guilty, *ver. 13, 14*. It is charged upon them, and it cannot be denied, (1.) That they have *revolted* from their allegiance to their *rightful sovereign*, therefore God has *forsaken their land*, and justly, because they have *forsaken his law*, which he had so plainly, so fully, so frequently, *set before them*, and had not observed his orders, nor *obeyed his voice*, nor *walked in* the ways that he had appointed. Here their wickedness began, in the omission of their duty to their God, and a contempt of his authority. But it did not end here. It is further charged upon them, (2.) That they have *entered themselves* into the service of pretenders and usurpers, have not only withdrawn themselves from their obedience to their prince, but have taken up arms against him. For, (1.) They have acted according to the *dictates of their own lusts*, have set up their own wills, the will of the flesh, and the carnal mind, in competition with and contradiction to the will of God; they have *walked after the imagination of their own heart*: they would do as they pleased, whatever God and conscience said to the contrary. (2.) They have worshipped the *creatures of their own fancy*, the work of their own hands, according to the tradition received from their fathers. They have *walked after Baalim*, the word is plural, they had many Baals, Baal-peor, and Baal-berith, the Bual of this place, and the Bual of the other place; for they had *lords many*, which *their fathers taught them* to worship, but which the God of their fathers had again and again forbidden. This was it for which the land perished. The King of kings never makes war thus upon his own subjects, but when they treacherously depart from him, and rebel against him, and it is become necessary by this means to chastise their rebellion, and reduce them to their allegiance: and they themselves shall at length acknowledge that he is just in all that is brought upon them.

1. The judgment given upon this indictment, the sentence upon the convicted rebels, which must now be executed, for it was righteous, and nothing could be moved in arrest of it: *The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel hath said it*, *ver. 15, 16*, and who can refuse it? (1.) That all their comforts at home shall be *poisoned and embittered* to them, *I will feed this people with wormwood*, or rather with *wolf's bane*, for it signifies an herb that is not wholesome, as wormwood is, though it be bitter, but some herb that is both nauseous and noxious: and I will give them *water of gall*, or *juice of hemlocks*, or some other herb that is poisonous, *to drink*. Every thing about them

them, till it comes to their very meat and drink, shall be a terror and torment to them; God will *curse their blessings*, Mal. ii. 2. (2.) That their *dispersion abroad* shall be their destruction, *ver. 16. I will scatter them among the heathen*. They are corrupted and debauched by their intimacy with the heathen with whom they mingled themselves, and learned their works, and now they shall lose themselves there where they lost their virtue among the heathen, i.e. they have violated the laws of that truth which is the bond and cement of society and commerce, and addicted themselves to deceit and lying, and therefore are justly crumbled to dust, and scattered among the heathen. They set up gods, which neither they nor their fathers had known strange gods, new gods, *Deut. xxxii. 17.* and now God will put them among neighbours which neither they nor their fathers have known, that they can claim no acquaintance with, and therefore can expect no favour from. And yet though they are scattered so as that they will not know where to find one another, God will know where to find them all out (*Psal. xxi. 8.*) with that evil which still pursues impertinent sinners: *I will send a sword after them*, some killing judgment or other, till I have consumed them; for when God judgeth he will overcome, when he pursues he will overtake. And now we see for what the land perishest, all this desolation is the desert of their deeds, and the performance of God's words.

2. He calls for the mourning women, and engageth them with the arts they have to affect people, and move their passions, to lament these sad calamities that were come or coming upon them, that the nation might be alarmed to prepare for them. The Lord of hosts himself saith, *Call for the mourning women that they may come*, *ver. 17.* The scope of this is to shew how very woeful and lamentable the condition of this people was likely to be.

1. Here is work for the counterfeit mourners; send for the cunning women that know how to compose mournful ditties, or at least to sing them in mournful tunes and accents, and therefore are made use of at funerals to supply the want of true mourners. Let these take up a wailing for us, *ver. 18.* The deaths and funerals were so many that people have wept for them till they have no more power to weep, as those, *1 Sam. xxx. 4.* Let them therefore do it now whose trade it is; or rather, it intimates the extreme sottishness and stupidity of the people, that laid not to heart the judgments they were under, nor even when there was so much blood shed, could find in their hearts to shed a tear. They cry not when God bindeth them, *Job xxxvi. 13.* God sent his mourning prophets to them to call them to weeping and mourning, but his word in their mouths did not work upon their faith; rather therefore than they shall go laughing to their ruin, let the mourning women come, and by humouring the thing try to work upon their fancy, that their eyes may at length run down with tears, and their eye-lids gush out with waters. First or last sinners must be weepers.

2. Here is work for the real mourners.

There is that which is a lamentation. The present scene is very tragical, *ver. 19. A voice of wailing is heard out of Zion*, some make this to be the song of the mourning-women; it is rather an echo to it, returned by those whose affections were moved by their wailings. In Zion the voice of joy and praise used to be heard, while the people kept close to God, but sin has altered the note, it is now the voice of lamentation. It should seem to be the voice of those who fled from all parts of the country to the castle of Zion for protection. Instead of rejoicing that they were got safe thither, they lamented that they were forced to seek for shelter there: *How are we spoiled!* How are we stripped of our possessions! we are greatly confounded, ashamed of ourselves and our poverty, for this is it they complain of, that is it they blush at the thoughts of, rather than of their sin: *We are confounded, because we have forsaken the land*, forced so to do by the enemy, not because we have forsaken the Lord, drawn aside of our own lust and enticed: *because our dwellings have cast us out*, not because our God hath cast us off. Thus unhumiliated hearts lament their calamity, but not their iniquity, the procuring cause of it.

2. There is more still to come that shall be for a lamentation: Things are bad, but they are likely to be worse. They whose land hath spued them out (as it did their predecessors the Canaanites, and justly, because they trod in their steps, *Lev. xviii. 28.*) complain that they are driven into the city, but after a while those of the city and they with them shall be forced thence too; *Yet hear the word of the Lord*, he hath something more to say to you, *ver. 20. let the women hear it*, whose tender spirits are apt to receive the impressions of grief and fear, for the men will not heed it, will not give it a patient hearing. The prophets will be glad to preach to a congregation of women that tremble at God's word. Let your ear receive the word of God's mouth, and bid it welcome, though it be a word of terror. Let the women teach their daughters wailing, which intimates that the trouble shall last long: grief shall be entailed upon the generation to come: young people are apt to love mirth, and expect mirth, and are disposed to be gay and airy, but let the elder women teach the younger to be serious; tell them what a veil of tears they must expect to find this world, and train them up among the mourners in Zion, *Tit. ii. 4, 5.* Let every one teach her neighbour lamentation, which intimates that the trouble shall spread far, shall go from house to house; people shall not need to sympathize with their friends, they shall all have cause enough to mourn for themselves. Note, Those that are themselves affected with the terrors of the Lord, should endeavour to affect others with them.

The judgment here threatened is made terrible.

1. Multitudes shall be slain, *ver. 21.* Death shall ride in triumph, and there shall be no escaping his arrests, when he comes with commission, neither within doors nor without: not within doors, for let the doors be shut never so fast, let them be never so firmly locked and bolted, *Death comes up into our windows*, like a thief in the night, it steals upon us ere we are aware. Nor doth it thus boldly attack the cottages only, but it is entered into our palaces, the palaces of our princes and great men, though never so stately, never so strongly built and guarded. Note, No palaces can keep out death. Nor are those more safe that are abroad; death cuts off even the children from without, and the young men from the streets. The children who might have been spared by the enemy in pity, because they had never been hurtful to them; and the young men who might have been spared in policy, because capable of being servicable to them, yet shall fall together by the sword. It is usual now even in the severest military executions, to put none to the sword but those that are found in arms; but then even the boys and girls playing in the streets were sacrificed to the fury of the conqueror.

2. Those that are slain shall be left unburied, *ver. 22. Speak, Thus saith the Lord*, for the confirmation and aggravation of what was before said, *even the carcases of men shall fall as dung*, neglected, and left to be offensive to the smell as dung is. Common humanity obligeth the survivors to bury the dead, even for their own sake; but here such numbers shall be slain, and those so dispersed all the country over, that it shall be an endless thing to bury them all, nor shall there be hands enough to do it, nor shall the conquerors permit it, and those that should do it shall be overwhelmed with grief, so that they shall have no heart to do it. The dead bodies even of the fairest and youngest, when they have lain a while, become as dung, such vile bodies have we. And here such multitudes shall fall, and their bodies

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shall lie as thick as heaps of dung in the furrows of the field, and no more notice taken of them, than of the handfuls which the harvest-man drops for the gleaners; for none shall gather them, but they shall remain in sight, monuments of divine vengeance, that the eyes of the impenitent survivors may affect their hearts. Slay them not, bury them not, lest my people forget, *Psal. lix. 11.*

23. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wife man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 24. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. 25. ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised; 26. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.

The prophet had been endeavouring to possess this people with a holy fear of God and his judgments, to convince them both of sin and wrath, but still they had recourse to some sorry subterfuge or other, under which to shelter themselves from the conviction, and with which to excuse themselves in their obstinacy and carelessness; he therefore sets himself here to drive them from their refuges of lies, and to shew them the insufficiency of them.

(2.) When they were told how inevitable the judgment would be, they pleaded the defence of their politics and powers, which, with the help of their wealth and treasure, they thought made their city impregnable. In answer to this, he shews them the folly of trusting to, and boasting of all these stays, while they have not a God in covenant to stay themselves upon, *ver. 23, 24.*

Here he shews, 1. What we may not depend upon in a day of distress: Let not the wife man glory in his wisdom, as if with the help of that he could out-wit or countermin the enemy; or in the greatest extremity find out some evasion or other, for a man's wisdom may fail him then when he needs it most, and he may be taken in his own craftiness: Ahithophel was befooled, and counsellors are often led away spoiled. But if a man's policies fail him, yet sure he may gain his point by might and dint of courage; no, let not the strong man glory in his strength, for the battle is not always to the strong; David the stripling proves too hard for Goliath the giant. All human force is nothing without God, worse than nothing against him. But may not the rich man's wealth be his strong city, money answers all things? no, let not the rich man glory in his riches, for they may prove so far from sheltering him, that they may expose him, and make him the fairer mark. Let not the people boast of the wise men, and mighty men, and rich men, that they have among them, as if they could make their part good against the Chaldeans, because they have wise men to advise concerning the war, mighty men to fight their battles, and rich men to bear the charges of the war: Let not particular persons think to escape the common calamity by their wisdom, might, or money, for all these will prove but vain things for safety.

2. He shews what we may depend upon in a day of distress, (1.) Our only comfort in trouble will be, that we have done our duty. They that refused to know God, *ver. 6.* will boast in vain of their wisdom and wealth, but they that know God intelligently, that understand aright that he is the Lord, that have not only right apprehensions concerning his nature and attributes, and relations to man, but receive and retain the impressions of them, may glory in this, it will be their rejoicing in the day of evil. (2.) Our only confidence in trouble will be, that having through grace in some measure done our duty, we shall find God a God all-sufficient to us. We may glory in this, that wherever we are, we have an acquaintance with, and an interest in, a God that exerciseth loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth: that is not only just to all his creatures, and will do no wrong to any of them, but kind to all his children, and will protect them and provide for them. For in these things I delight. God delights to shew kindness, and to execute judgment himself, and is pleased with those who herein are followers of him as dear children. Those that have such knowledge of the glory of God, as to be changed into the same image, and to partake of his holiness, it is their perfection and glory: and the God they thus faithfully conform to, they may cheerfully confide in in their greatest straits. But the prophet intimates, that the generality of this people took no care about this. Their wisdom, and might, and riches, were their joy and hope, which would end in grief and despair. But those few among them that had the knowledge of God might please themselves with it, and boast themselves of it; it would stand them in better stead than thousands of gold and silver.

(2.) When they were told how provoking their sins were to God, they vainly pleaded the covenant of their circumcision. No doubt but they were the people of God; as they had the temple of the Lord in their city, so they had the mark of his children in their flesh. It is true the Chaldean army has laid such and such nations waste, because they were uncircumcised, and therefore not under the protection of the divine providence, as we are. To this the prophet answers, That the days of visitation were now at hand, in which God would punish all wicked people, without making any distinction between the circumcised and uncircumcised, *ver. 25, 26.* They had by sin profaned the crown of their peculiarity, and lived in common with the uncircumcised nations, and so had forfeited the benefit of it, and must expect to fare never the better for it. God will punish the circumcised with the uncircumcised. As the ignorance of the uncircumcised shall not excuse their wickedness, so neither shall the privileges of the circumcised excuse theirs, but they shall be punished together. Note, The Judge of all the earth is impartial, and none shall fare the better at his bar for any external advantages, but he will render to every man, circumcised or uncircumcised, according to his works. The condemnation of impenitent sinners that are baptized will be as sure, nay, and more severe, than that of impenitent sinners that are unbaptized. It would affect one to find here Judah industriously put between Egypt and Edom, a standing upon a level with them, and under the same doom, *ver. 26.* These nations were forbidden a share in the Jews' privileges, *Deut. xxiii. 3.* But the Jews are here told that they shall share in their punishments. Those in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness, are supposed to be the Kedarens, and those of the kingdoms of Hazar, as appears by comparing *Jer. xlix. 28—32.* Some think they are so called, because they dwell as it were in a corner of the world; Others, because they had the hair of their head pulled into corners: However

that was, they were of those nations that were uncircumcised in the flesh, and the Jews are ranked with them, and are as near to ruin for their sins as they; for *all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart*: They have the sign, but not the thing signified, *Jer. iv. 4.* They are heathens in their hearts, strangers to God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works. Their hearts are disposed to idols, as the hearts of the *uncircumcised Gentiles* are. Note, The seals of the covenant, though they dignify and oblige us, yet they will not save us, unless the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives agree with the covenant. That only is circumcision, and that baptism, which is *of the heart*, *Rom. ii. 28, 29.*

C H A P. X.

We may conjecture that the prophesy of this chapter was delivered after the first captivity, in the time of Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, when many were carried away to Babylon, for it has a double reference, (1.) To those that were carried away into the land of the Chaldeans, a country notorious above any other for idolatry and superstition: And they are here cautioned against the infection of the place, not to learn the way of the heathen, ver. 1, 2. For their astrology and idolatry are both foolish things, ver. 3—5. The worshippers of idols brutish, ver. 8, 9. And so it will appear in the day of their visitation, ver. 14, 15. They are likewise exhorted to adhere firmly to the God of Israel, for there is none like him, ver. 6, 7. He is the true God, lives for ever, and has the government of the world, ver. 10—13. And his people are happy in him, ver. 16. (2.) To those that yet remained in their own land. And they are cautioned against security, and bid to expect distress, ver. 17, 18. And that by a foreign enemy, which God would bring upon them for their sin, ver. 20—22. This calamity the prophet laments, ver. 19. and prays for the mitigation of it, ver. 23—25.

1. **H**EAR ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: 2: Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. 3. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest (the work of the hands of the workman) with the axe. 4. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. 5. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. 6. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. 7. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. 8. But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities. 9. Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workmen, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their cloathing: they are all the work of cunning men. 10. But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. 11. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. 12. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. 13. When he uttereth his voice there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. 14. Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. 15. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. 16. The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name.

The prophet Isaiah when he prophesied of the captivity in Babylon, added warnings against idolatry, and largely exposed the foolishness of idolaters, not only because the temptations in Babylon would be in danger of drawing the Jews there to idolatry, but because the afflictions in Babylon were designed to cure them of their idolatry. Thus the prophet Jeremiah here arms people against the idolatrous usages and customs of the heathen, not only for the use of those that were gone to Babylon, but of those also that staid behind; that being convinced and reclaimed by the word of God, the rod might be prevented, and it is written for our learning. Observe here.

1. A solemn charge given to the people of God, not to conform themselves to the ways and customs of the heathen. *Let the house of Israel hear and receive this word from the God of Israel, Learn not the way of the heathen*, do not approve of it, no, nor think indifferently concerning it, much less imitate it, or accustom yourselves to it. Let not any of their customs steal in among you, as they are apt to do insensibly, nor mingle themselves with your religion. Note, It ill becomes those that are taught of God to learn the way of the heathen, and to think of worshipping the true God with such rites and ceremonies as they used in the worship of their false gods. See *Deut. xii. 29, 30, 31.* It was the way of the heathen to worship the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; to them they gave divine honours, and from them they expected divine favours,

and therefore according as the signs of heaven were, whether they were auspicious or ominous, they thought themselves countenanced or discountenanced by their deities; which made them observe those signs, the eclipses of the sun and moon, the conjunctions and oppositions of the planets, and all the unusual phenomena of the celestial globe, with a great deal of anxiety and trembling: business was stopped, if any thing occurred that was thought to bode ill; if it did but *thunder on their left hand*, they were almost as if they had been thunderstruck. Now God would not have his people to be dismayed at the signs of heaven: to reverence the stars as deities, or to frighten themselves with any prognostications grounded upon them. Let them fear the God of heaven, and keep up a reverence of his providence, and then they need not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the stars in their courses fight not against any that are at peace with God. The heathen are dismayed at these signs, for they know no better, but let not the house of Israel that are taught of God be so.

2. Divers good reasons given to enforce this charge.

3. The way of the heathen is very ridiculous and absurd, and is condemned even by the dictates of right reason, ver. 3. The statutes and ordinances of the heathen are vanity itself, they cannot stand the test of a rational disquisition. This is again and again insisted upon here, as it was by Isaiah. The Chaldeans valued themselves by their wisdom, in which they thought they excelled all their neighbours; but the prophet here shews, that they, and all others that worshipped idols, and expected help and relief from them, were brutish and foolish, and had not common sense.

(1.) Consider what the idol is that is worshipped, it was a tree cut out of the forest originally, it was fitted up by hands of the workman, squared and sawed, and worked into shape, see *Isa. xlv. 12, &c.* But after all it was but the stock of a tree, fitter to make a gate-post of than any thing else. But to hide the wood, they deck it with silver and gold, they gild or lacquer it, or they deck it with gold and silver lace, or cloth of tissue. They fasten it to its place, which they themselves have assigned it, with nails and hammers, that it fall not, or be thrown down or stolen away, ver. 4. The image is made straight enough, and it cannot be denied but that the workman did his part, for it is upright as the palm-tree, ver. 5. it looks stately, and stands up as if it was going to speak to you, but it cannot speak, it is a poor dumb creature: nor can it take one step towards your relief: if there be any occasion for it to shift its place, it must be carried in procession, for it cannot go. Very fitly doth it come in here, *be not afraid of them*, no more than of the signs of heaven: *be not afraid of incurring their displeasure, for they can do no evil*; be not afraid of forfeiting their favour, for neither is it in them to do good. If you think to mend the matter by mending the materials of which the idol is made, you deceive yourselves: Idols of gold and silver are as unworthy to be worshipped as wooden gods: The stock is a doctrine of vanities, ver. 8. It teacheth lies, teacheth lies concerning God: It is an instruction of vanities, wood it is. It is likely the idols of gold and silver had wood underneath for the substratum, and then silver spread into plate is brought from Tarshish, imported from beyond the sea, and gold from Uphaz, or Phaz, which is sometimes rendered the fine gold, *Psalm. xxi. 3.* A great deal of art is used, and pains taken about it: They are not such ordinary mechanics that are employed about these, as about the wooden gods, ver. 9. These are cunning men, it is the work of the workman, the graver must do his part, when it has passed through the hands of the founder: Those were but decked here and there with silver and gold, these are silver and gold all over. And that these gods might be revered as kings, blue and purple is their cloathing, the colour of royal robes, ver. 9. which amuseth ignorant worshippers, but makes the matter no better. For what is the idol when it is made, and when they have made the best they can of it? He tells us, ver. 14. They are falsehood, they are not what they pretend to be, but a great cheat put upon the world: They are worshipped as the god that give us breath, and life, and sense, whereas they are lifeless, senseless things themselves, and there is no breath in them. No spirit in them, so the word is, they are not animated or inhabited, as they are supposed to be, by any divine spirit or nomen; they are so far from being gods, that they have not so much as the spirit of a beast that goes downward. They are vanity, and the work of errors, ver. 15. Enquire into the use of them, and you will find they are vanity, they are good for nothing, no help is to be expected from them, nor any confidence put in them: they are a deceitful work, works of illusions, or mere mockeries, so some read the following clause: they delude those that put their trust in them, make fools of them, or rather, they make fools of themselves. Enquire into the rise of them, and they are the work of errors, grounded upon the grossest mistakes that ever men that pretended to reason were guilty of: they are the creatures of a deluded fancy; and the errors by which they were produced, they propagate among their worshippers.

(2.) Infer from hence what the idolaters are that worship these idols, ver. 8. They are altogether brutish and foolish; they that make them are like unto them, senseless and stupid, and there is no spirit in them, no use of reason, else they would never believe in such gods; no sense of honour, else they would never stoop to them, ver. 14. Every man that makes or worships idols, is become brutish in his knowledge, i. e. brutish for want of knowledge, or brutish in that very thing which one would think they should be fully acquainted with; compare *Jude 10.* What they know naturally, what they cannot but know by the light of nature, in those things, as brute beasts they corrupt themselves. Though in the works of creation they cannot but see the eternal power and godhead of the Creator, yet they are become vain in their imaginations, not liking to retain God in their knowledge. See *Rom. i. 21—23.* Nay, whereas they thought it a piece of wisdom thus to multiply gods, it really was the greatest folly they could be guilty of: The world by wisdom knew not God, *1 Cor. i. 21.* *Rom. i. 22.* Every founder is himself confounded by the graven image; when he has made it by a mistake, he is more and more confirmed in his mistake by it; he is bewildered, bewitched, and cannot disentangle himself from the snare. Or, it is what he will one time or other be ashamed of.

2. The God of Israel is the one only living and true God, and those that have him for their God need not make their application to any other: nay, to set up any other in competition with him, is the greatest affront and injury that can be done him.

Let the house of Israel cleave to the God of Israel, and serve and worship him only. For,

1. He is a non-such. Whatever men may set in competition with him, there is none to be compared with him. The prophet turns from speaking with the utmost disdain of the idols of the heathen (as well he might) to speak with the most profound and awful reverence of the God of Israel, ver. 6, 7. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, none of all the heroes which the heathen have deified, and make such ado about; the dead men of whom they made dead images, and worshipped them. Some were deified and adored for their wisdom, but among all the wise men of the nations, the greatest philosophers or statesmen, as Apollo or Hermes, there is none like thee. Others were deified and adored for their dominion, but in all their royalty, so it may be read, among all their kings, as Saturn and Jupiter, there is none like unto thee. What is the glory of a man that invented an

useful

useful art, or founded a flourishing kingdom (and these were grounds sufficient among the heathen to invite men to an apotheosis) compared with the glory of him that is the Creator of the world, and that *formeth the spirit of man within him*? What is the glory of the greatest prince or potentate, compared with the glory of him whose kingdom *ruleth over all*? He acknowledgeth, ver. 6. *O Lord, thou art great, infinite and immense, and thy name is great in might*; thou hast all power, and art known to have it; men's name is often beyond their might, they are taught to be greater than they are, but God's name is great, and no greater than he really is. And therefore *who would not fear thee, O king of nations?* Who would not choose to worship such a God as this, that can do every thing, rather than such dead idols as the heathen worship, that can do nothing? Who would not be afraid of offending or forsaking a God whose name is so great in might? Which of all the nations, if they understand themselves aright, would not fear him who is the *King of nations*? Note, It is not only the house of Israel that is bound to worship the great Jehovah as the *God of Israel*, the *King of saints*, Rev. xv. 4, 5. but all the families of the earth are bound to worship him as *King of nations*; for to him it doth appertain, to him it suits and agrees. Note, There is an admirable decency and congruity in the worshipping of God only: it is fit that he is *God alone*, should alone be served; that he that is Lord of all should be served by all; that he that is great should be greatly feared, and greatly praised.

2. His *verity* is as evident as the idol's *vanity*, ver. 12. They are the work of men's hands, and therefore nothing is more plain than that it is a jest to worship them, if that may be called a *jest*, which is so great an indignity to him that made us: *But the Lord is the true God, the God of truth*, he is *God in truth*: *God Jehovah is truth*; he is not a counterfeit and pretender as they are, but is really what he has revealed himself to be; he is one we may depend upon, in whom and by whom we cannot be deceived. (1.) Look upon him as he is in himself, and he is the *living God*; he is life itself, has life in himself, and is the fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are *dead things*, worthless and useless, but our's is a *living God*, and hath immortality. (2.) Look upon him with relation to his creatures, and he is a *king*, an absolute monarch over them all, is their owner and ruler, has an incontestible right both to command them and dispose of them; as a *king* he protects the creatures, provides for their welfare, and preserves peace among them. He is an *everlasting king*: The *councils* of his kingdom were from everlasting, and the *continuance* of it will be to everlasting. He is a *king of eternity*. The idols whom they call their *kings*, are but of yesterday, and will soon be abolished; and the kings of the earth, that set them up to be worshipped, will themselves be in the dust shortly, but the Lord shall reign for ever; *thy God, O Zion, unto all generations*.

3. None know the power of his anger. Let us stand in awe, and not dare to provoke him by giving that glory to another which is due to him alone, for *at his wrath the earth shall tremble*, even the strongest and stoutest of the kings of the earth; nay, the earth, as firmly as it is fixed, when he pleaseth, is made to quake, and the rocks to tremble, Psal. civ. 32. Hab. iii. 6—10. Though the *nations* should join together to contend with him, and unite their force, yet they would be found utterly unable not only to resist, but even to abide his indignation. They cannot only not make head against it, for it would overcome them, but they cannot bear up under it, for it would overload them, Psal. lxxvi. 7, 8. Nahum i. 6.

4. He is the God of nature, the fountain of all being; and all the powers of nature are at his command and dispose, ver. 12, 13. The God we worship is he that made the heavens and the earth, and has a sovereign dominion over both: So that his *invisible things* are manifested and proved in the things that are seen.

(1.) If we look back we find that the whole world owed its original to him, as its first cause. It was a common saying, even among the Greeks, *He that sits up to be another God, ought first to make another world*. While the heathen worship gods that are made, we worship the God that made us and all things. (1.) The earth is a vast bulk, has valuable treasures in its bowels, and more valuable fruits on its surface. It and them he hath made by his power; and it is by no less than an infinite power that it hangs upon nothing, as it doth, Job xxvi. 7. *Ponderibus librata suis*. (2.) The world, the habitable part of the earth, is admirably fitted for the use and service of man, and he hath established it so by his wisdom, so that it continues serviceable in constant changes, and yet a continual stability from one generation to another. Therefore both the earth and the world are his, Psal. xxiv. 1. (3.) The heavens are wonderfully stretched out to an incredible extent, and it is by his discretion that they are so, and that the motions of the heavenly bodies are directed for the benefit of this lower world. These declare his glory, Psal. xix. 1. and oblige us to declare it; and not give that glory to the heavens which is due to him that made them.

(2.) If we look up, we see his providence to be a continued creation, ver. 13. When he uttereth his voice, or gives the word of command, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, which are poured out on the earth, whether for judgment or mercy, as he intends them. When he uttereth his voice in the thunder, presently there follow thunder-showers, in which there are a multitude of waters; and those come with a noise, as the margin reads it; and we read of the noise of abundance of rain, 1 Kings xviii. 41. Nay, there are wonders done daily in the kingdom of nature without noise: He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth, from all parts of the earth, even the most remote, and chiefly those that lie next the sea. All the earth pays the tribute of vapours, because all the earth receives the blessing of rain. And thus the moisture in the universe, like the money in a kingdom, and the blood in the body, is continually circulating for the good of the whole. These vapours produce wonders, for of them are formed lightnings for the rain and the winds, which God from time to time brings forth out of his treasures, as there is occasion for them, directing them all in such measure and for such use as he thinks fit; as payments are made out of the treasury. All the meteors are so ready to serve God's purposes, that he seems to have treasures of them that cannot be exhausted, and may at any time be drawn from, Psal. cxxxv. 7. God glories in the treasures he has of these, Job xxxviii. 22, 23. This God can do, but which of the idols of the heathen can do the like? Note, There is no sort of weather but furnisheth us with a proof and instance of the wisdom and power of the great Creator.

5. This God is Israel's God in covenant, and the felicity of every Israelite indeed. Therefore let the house of Israel cleave to him, and not forsake him to embrace idols; for if they do, they certainly change for the worse, for, ver. 16. *the portion of Jacob is not like them*: Their rock is not as our rock, Deut. xxxii. 31. nor our's like their mole-hills. Note, 1. They that have the Lord for their God, have a full and complete happiness in him. The *God of Jacob is the portion of Jacob*; he is his all, and in him he hath enough, and needs no more in this world or the other. In him we have a worthy portion. Psalm xvi. 5. 2. If we have an entire satisfaction and complacency in God as our portion, he will have a gracious delight in us as his people, whom he owns as *the rod of his inheritance*, his possession and treasure, with whom he dwells, and by whom he is served

and honoured. 3. It is the unspeakable comfort of all the Lord's people, that he that is their God is the *former of all things*, and therefore is able to do all that for them, and give all that to them, which they stand in need of: *Their help stands in his name who made heaven and earth*. And he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts in heaven and earth, hath them all at his command, and will command them into the service of his people when there is occasion. This is the name by which they know him, which they first give him the glory of, and then take to themselves the comfort of. 4. Herein God's people are happy above all other people, happy indeed, *hona si sua norint*. The gods which the heathen pride and please, and so portion themselves in, are vanity and a lie; but the portion of Jacob is not like them.

3. The prophet having thus compared the gods of the heathen with the God of Israel (between whom there is no comparison) reads the doom, the certain doom of all those pretenders; and directs the Jews in God's name to read it to the worshippers of idols, though they were their lords and masters, ver. 11. *Thus shall ye say unto them*, and the God ye serve will hear you out in saying it, *The gods which have not made the heavens and the earth*, and therefore are no Gods, but usurpers of the honour due to him only, who did make heaven and earth, *those shall perish*; perish of course, because they are vanity; perish by his righteous sentence, because they are rivals with him, as gods they shall perish: *From off the earth*, even all those things on earth beneath, which they make gods of; and *from under these heavens* even all those things in the firmament of heaven, under the highest heavens, which are deified, according to the description in the second commandment. These words in the original are not in the Hebrew, like all the rest, but in the Chaldean dialect, that the Jews in captivity might have this ready to say to the Chaldeans in their own language, when they tempted them to idolatry: "Do you press us to worship your gods? We will never do that; for, (1.) They are counterfeit deities, they are no gods, for they have not made the heavens and the earth, and therefore are not intitled to our homage; nor are we indebted to them, either for the products of the earth, or the influences of heaven, as we are to the God of Israel." The primitive Christians would say, when they were urged to worship such a god, *Let him make a world, and he shall be my god*. While we have him to worship who made heaven and earth, it is very absurd to worship any other. (2.) They are condemned deities; they shall perish: the time shall come when they shall be no more respected as they are now, but shall be buried in oblivion, and they and their worshippers shall sink together; the earth shall no longer bear them, the heavens shall no longer cover them, but both shall abandon them. It is repeated, ver. 15. *In the time of their visitation*; when God comes to reckon with idolaters, he shall make them sick of their idols, and glad to be rid of them; they shall cast them to the moles and to the bats, Isa. ii. 20. Whatever runs against God and religion, will be run down at last.

17. ¶ Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortrefs. 18. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find it so. 19. ¶ Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it. 20. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains. 21. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. 22. Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north-country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons. 23. ¶ O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. 24. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. 25. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

In these verses.

(1.) The prophet threatens in God's name the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 17, 18. The Jews that continued in their own land, after some were carried into captivity, were very secure; they thought themselves inhabitants of a fortrefs, their country was their stronghold, and in their own conceit impregnable, but they are here bid to think of leaving it: they must prepare to go after their brethren, and pack up their effects in expectation of it: *Gather up thy wares out of the land*; contract your affairs, and bring them into as little a compass as you can. *Arise, depart, this is not your rest*, Micah ii. 10. Let not what you have lie scattered, for the Chaldeans will be upon you again, to be the executioners of the sentence God has passed upon you, ver. 18. *Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once*; they have hitherto dropped out, by a few at a time, but one captivity more shall make a thorough riddance, and they shall be sling out as a stone out of a sling, so easily, so thoroughly shall they be cast out: nothing of them shall remain: they shall be thrown out with violence, and driven to a place at a great distance off in a little time. See this comparison used to signify an utter destruction, 1 Sam. xxv. 29. *Yet once more God will shake their land, and shake the wicked out of it*, Heb. xii. 26. He adds, *And I will distress them, that they may find it so*. He will not only throw them out hence (that he may do, and yet they may be easy elsewhere) but wherever they go trouble shall follow them; they shall be continually perplexed and straitened, and at a loss within themselves; and who or what can make those easy whom God will distress? Whom he will distress, that they may find it so. i. e. that they may feel that which they would not believe. They were told many a time of the weight of God's wrath, and their utter inability to make head against it, or bear up under it; were told that their sin would be their ruin; and they would not regard or credit what was told them, but now they shall find it so; and therefore God will pursue them with his judgments, that they may find it so, and be forced to acknowledge it. Note, Sooner or later sinners will find it just so as the word of God has represented things to them, and no better, and that the threatenings were not bugbears.

(2.) He

(2.) He brings in the people sadly lamenting their calamities, *ver. 19. Woe is me for my hurt!* Some make this the prophets own lamentation, not for himself, but for the calamities and desolations of his country: He mourned for those that would not be persuaded to mourn for themselves; and since there were none that had so much sense as to join with him, he *weeps in secret*, and cries out, *Woe is me!* In mournful times, it becomes us to be of a mournful spirit. But it may be taken as the language of the people, considered as a body, and therefore speaking as a single person. It is what *they should say*; the prophet puts these words into their mouths: whether they would say them or no, they should have cause to say them: Some among them would thus bemoan themselves, and all of them at last would be forced to do it.

1. They lament it, that the affliction is very great, and it is very hard to them to bear it; the more hard, because they had not been used to trouble, and now did not expect it; *Woe is me for my hurt*; not for what I fear, but for what I feel; for they are not, as some are, *worse frightened than hurt*. Nor is it a slight hurt, but a wound, a wound that is grievous, very painful, and very threatening.

2. That there is no remedy but patience; they cannot help themselves, but must sit still and abide it. But I said, when I was about to complain of my wound, to what purpose is it to complain? *This is a grief, and I must bear it* as well as I can. This is the language rather of a fallen than a gracious submission; of a patience *per force*, not a patience by principle. When I am in affliction, I should say, this is an evil, and I will bear it, because it is the will of God I should, because his wisdom has appointed this for me, and his grace will make it work for good to me. This is *receiving evil* at the hand of God, *Job ii. 10.* But to say, this is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it, is but a brutal patience, and argues a want of those good thoughts of God which we should always have, even under our afflictions; saying, not only God can and will do what he pleaseth, but *let him do what he pleaseth*.

3. That the country was quite ruined and wasted, *ver. 20. My tabernacle is spoiled.* Jerusalem, though a strong city, now proves as weak and moveable as a tabernacle: Their government is dissolved, and their state fallen to pieces, like a tabernacle or tent when it is taken down, and *all its cords*, that should keep it together, are broken. Or, by the tabernacle here may be meant the temple, the sanctuary, which at first was but a tabernacle, and is now called so, as then it was sometimes called a temple. Their church is ruined, and all the supports of it fail. It was a general destruction of church and state, city and country: and there were none to repair those desolations. *My children are gone forth of me*; some are fled, others slain, others carried into captivity, so that as to me *they are not*. I am like to be an outcast, and to perish for want of shelter; for *there is none to stretch forth my tent any more*, none of my children that used to do it for me; *none to set up my curtains*, none to do me any service. *Jerusalem has none to guide her of all her sins*, *Jer. li. 18.*

4. That the rulers took no care, nor any proper measures for the redress of their grievance, and the re-establishing of their ruined state, *ver. 21. The pastors are become brutish.* When the tents, the shepherds' tents, were spoiled, *ver. 20.* it concerned the shepherds to look after them, but they were *foolish shepherds*. Their kings and princes had no regard at all to the public welfare, seemed to have no sense of the desolations of the land, but were quite befuddled and infatuated. The priests, the pastors of God's tabernacle, did a great deal towards the ruin of religion, but nothing towards the repair of it. They are *brutish* indeed, for *they have not sought the Lord*, they have neither made their peace with him nor their prayer to him; they had no eye to him and his providence in their management of affairs; they neither acknowledged the judgment, nor expected the deliverance to come from his hand. Note, Those are brutish people that do not seek the Lord, that live without prayer, and live without God in the world. Every man is either a *fool* or a *brute*. But it is sad indeed with a people, when their pastors, that should feed them with knowledge and understanding, are themselves thus brutish. And what comes of it? *Therefore they shall not prosper*; none of their attempts for the public safety shall succeed. Note, Those cannot expect to prosper, who do not by faith and prayer take God along with them in all their ways. And when the *pastors are brutish*, what else can be expected but that *all their flocks should be scattered*? for *if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch*. The ruin of a people is often owing to the *brutishness* of their *pastors*.

5. That the report of the enemy's approach was very dreadful, *ver. 22. The noise of the bruit is come*, i. e. of the report which at first was but whispered and bruited abroad, as wanting confirmation: It now proves too true, there is a *great commotion* ariseth out of the north country, which threatens to make all the cities of Judah desolate, and a *den of dragons*; for they must all expect to be sacrificed to the avarice and fury of the Chaldean army. And what else can that place expect, but to be made a *den of dragons*, which has by sin made itself a *den of thieves*?

(3.) He turns to God, and addresseth himself to him, finding it to little purpose to speak to the people. It is some comfort to poor ministers, that if men will not hear them, God will; and to him they have liberty of access at all times. Let them close their preaching with prayer, as the prophet, and then they shall have no reason to say they have *laboured in vain*.

6. The prophet here acknowledgeth the sovereignty and dominion of the divine providence, that by it, and not by their own will and wisdom, the affairs both of nations and particular persons are directed and determined, *ver. 23.* This is an article of our faith, which it is very proper for us to make confession of at the throne of grace, when we are complaining of an affliction or suing for a mercy. *O Lord, I know and believe, that the way of man is not in himself.* Nebuchadnezzar did not come of himself against our land, but by the direction of a divine providence. We cannot of ourselves do any thing for our own relief, unless God work with us and command deliverance for us; for *it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*, though he seem in his walking to be perfectly at liberty, and to choose his own way. Those that had promised themselves a long enjoyment of their estates and possessions, when they were thrown out by the Chaldeans, were made to know by sad experience, that *the way of man is not in himself*; the designs which men lay deep, and think well formed, are dashed to pieces in a moment. We must all apply this to ourselves, and mix faith with it; that we are not at our own dispose, but under a divine direction; the event is often over-ruled quite contrary to our intention and expectation. We are not masters of our own way, nor can we think that every thing should be according to our mind; we must therefore refer ourselves to God, and acquiesce in his will. Some think the prophet mentions this here with design to make this comfortable use of it, that the way of the Chaldean army being not in themselves, they can do no more than God permits them; he can set bounds to these proud waves, and say, *hitherto they shall come, and no farther*. And a quieting consideration it is, that the most formidable enemies have no power against us but what is given them from above.

2. He deprecates the divine wrath, that it might not fall upon God's Israel, *ver. 24.* He speaks not for himself only, but on the behalf of his peo-

ple; *O Lord, correct me, but with judgment*, i. e. in measure and with moderation, and in wisdom, no more than is necessary for the driving out of the foolishness that is bound up in our hearts: *Not in thine anger*; how severe soever the correction be, let it come from thy love, and be designed for our good, and made to work for good; not to bring us to nothing, but to bring us home to thyself. Let it not be according to the desert of our sins, but according to the designs of thy grace. Note, 1. We cannot pray in faith that we may never be corrected, while we are conscious to ourselves that we need it and deserve it, and know that as many as God loves he chastens. 2. The great thing we should dread in affliction is the wrath of God. Say not, *Lord, do not correct me*, but, *Lord, do not correct me in anger*; for that will infuse wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery; that will bring us to nothing; we may bear the smart of his rod, but we cannot bear the weight of his wrath.

3. He imprecates the divine wrath against the oppressors and persecutors of Israel, *ver. 25. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not.* This prayer doth not come from a spirit of malice or revenge, nor is it intended to prescribe to God whom he should execute his judgments upon, or in what order: But, (1.) It is an appeal to his justice; *q. d.* Lord, we are a provoking people, but are there not other nations that are more so? And shall we only be punished? We are thy children, and may expect a fatherly correction; but they are thine enemies, and against them we have reason to think thine indignation should be, not against us. This is God's usual method: *The cup put into the hands of God's people is full of mixtures, mixtures of mercy*; but the dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked of the earth, let them *ering them out*, *Psal. lxxv. 8.* (2.) It is a prediction of God's judgments upon all the impenitent enemies of his church and kingdom. If judgment begin thus at the house of God, what shall be the end of those that obey not his gospel? 1. Peter iv. 17. See how the heathen are described, on whom God's fury shall be poured out. (1.) They are *strangers* to God, and are content to be so. They know him not, nor desire to know him. They are *families* that live without prayer, that have nothing of religion among them; they call not on God's name: And those that *restrain prayer*, it is an evidence they know not God; for they that know him will seek to him, and intreat his favour. (2.) They are *persecutors* of the people of God, and are resolved to be so. They have eaten up Jacob, with as much greediness, as those that are hungry eat their necessary food; nay, with more, for they never know when they have enough; they have *decoured him and consumed him*, and made his habitation desolate, i. e. the land in which he lives; or the temple of God, which is his habitation among them. Note, What the heathen in their rage and malice do against the people of God, though therein he makes use of them as the instruments of his correction, yet he will for that make them the objects of his indignation. This prayer is taken from *Psal. lxxix. 6, 7.*

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter, (1.) God by the prophet puts the people in mind of the covenant he had made with their fathers; and how much he had insisted upon it, as the condition of the covenant, that they should be obedient to him, *ver. 1—7.* (2.) He chargeth it upon them, that they, in succession to their fathers, and in confederacy among themselves, had obstinately refused to obey him, *ver. 8—10.* (3.) He threatens to punish them with utter ruin for their disobedience, especially for their idolatry, *ver. 11—13.* and tells them, that their idols should not save them, *ver. 12.* that their prophets should not pray for them, *ver. 14.* and justifies his proceedings herein, they having brought all this mischief upon themselves by their own folly and wilfulness, *ver. 15—17.* (4.) Here is an account of a conspiracy formed against Jeremiah by his fellow-citizens, the men of Anathoth; God's discovery of it to him, *ver. 18, 19.* His prayer against them, *ver. 20.* and a prediction of God's judgments upon them for it, *ver. 21—23.*

1. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; 3. And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, 4. Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God: 5. That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD, 6. Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. 7. For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. 8. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not. 9. And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

The prophet here as prosecutor in God's name draws up an indictment against the Jews, for wilful disobedience to the commands of the rightful sovereign. And for the more solemn management of his charge.

1. He produceth the commission he had to draw up the charge against them:

them: he did not take pleasure in accusing the children of his people, but God commanded him to *speake it to the men of Judah*, ver. 1. 2. In the original it is plural, *speake ye this*; for what he said to Jeremiah was the same that he gave in charge to all his servants the prophets. They none of them said any other, but what Moses in the law had said; to that therefore they must refer themselves, and direct the people, *Hear the words of this covenant*; turn to your Bibles, be judged by them. Jeremiah must now *proclaim this* in the cities of Judah, and the streets of Jerusalem, that all may hear, for all are concerned. All the words for reproof and conviction, which the prophets spake, were grounded upon the *words of the covenant*, and agreed with that; and therefore *hear these words*, and understand by them upon what terms you stood with God at first; and then by comparing yourselves with the covenant, you will soon be aware upon what terms you now stand with him.

2. He opens the charter upon which their state was founded, and by which they held their privileges. They had forgotten the tenor of it, and lived as if they thought the grant was absolute, and that they might do what they pleased, and yet have what God had promised; or as if they thought the keeping up the ceremonial observances was all that God required of them. He therefore shews them with all possible plainness, that the thing God insisted upon was *obedience*, that was *better than sacrifice*. He said, *Obey my voice*, ver. 4. and again, ver. 7. *Obey my voice*. Own God for your master, give up yourselves to him as his subjects and servants: attend to all the declarations of his mind and will, and make conscience of complying with them. *Do my commandments*, not only in some things, but *according to all which I command you*; make conscience of moral duties especially, and rest not in those that are merely ritual: *Hear the words of the covenant, and do them*.

(1.) This was the original contract between God and them, when he first formed them into a people. It was what he *commanded their fathers*, when he first brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, ver. 4. and again, ver. 7. He never intended to take them under his conduct and protection upon any other terms. This was it that he required from them, in gratitude for the great things he did for them when he brought them from the iron furnace. Therefore he redeemed them out of the service of the Egyptians, which was perfect slavery, that he might take them into his own service, which is perfect freedom, Luke i. 74, 75.

(2.) This was not only laid before them then, but it was with the greatest importunity imaginable pressed upon them, ver. 7. God not only commanded, but *earnestly protested* it to their fathers, when he brought them into covenant with himself. Moses inculcated it again and again, by precept upon precept, and line upon line.

(3.) This was made the condition of the relation between them and God, which was so much their honour and privilege: *So shall ye be my people, and I will be your God*; I will own you for mine, and you may call upon me as your's; which intimates, that if they refused to obey, they could no longer claim the benefit of the relation.

(4.) It was upon these terms that the land of Canaan was given them for a possession: *Obey my voice, that I may perform the oath sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey*, ver. 5. God was ready to fulfil the promise, but then they must fulfil the condition; if not, the promise is void, and it is just with God to turn them out of possession. Being brought in upon their good behaviour, they had no wrong done them if they were turned out upon their ill behaviour. *Obedience* was the rent reserved by the lease, with a power to re-enter for non-payment.

(5.) This obedience was not only made a condition of the blessing, but was required under the penalty of a curse. This is mentioned first here, ver. 3. that they might if possible be awakened by the terrors of the Lord. *Cursed be the man*, though it were but a single person, *that obeys not the words of this covenant*; much more when it is the body of the nation that rebels. There are curses of the covenant as well as blessings; and Moses set before them not only *life and good*, but *death and evil*, Deut. xxx. 15. So that they had fair warning given them of the fatal consequences of disobedience.

(6.) Lest this covenant should be forgotten, and because out of mind should be thought out of date, God had from time to time called to them to remember it, and by his servants the prophets had made a *continual claim* of this rent; so that they could not plead in excuse of their non-payment, that it had never been demanded; from the day he brought them out of Egypt to this day (and that was near 1000 years) he had been, in one way or other, at sundry times and in divers manners, *protesting to them* the necessity of obedience. God keeps an account how long we have enjoyed the means of grace, and how powerful those means have been; how often we have been not only spoken to, but *protested to*, concerning our duty.

(7.) This covenant was consented to, ver. 5. *Then answered I, and said, Amen, so be it, O Lord*. These are the words of the prophet, expressing either, (1.) His own consent to the covenant for himself, and his desire to have the benefit of it. God promised Canaan to the obedient; Lord, saith he, I take thee at thy word, I will be obedient; let me have mine inheritance in the land of promise, of which Canaan is a type. Or, (2.) His good will and good wish, that his people might have the benefit of it; *Amen*. Lord, let them still be kept in possession of this good land, and not turned out of it; make good the promise to them. Or, (3.) His people's consent to the covenant; then answered I, in the name of the people, *So be it*. Taking it in this sense, it refers to the declared consent which the people gave to the covenant, not only to the precepts of it, when they said, *All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient*: but to the penalties, when they said *Amen* to all the curses upon mount Ebal. The more solemnly we have engaged ourselves to God, the more reason we have to hope that it will be perpetual; and yet here it did not prove so.

3. He chargeth them with breach of covenant, such a breach as amounted to a forfeiture of their charter, ver. 8. God had said again and again, by his law and by his prophets, *Obey my voice*, do as you are bidden, and all shall be well; yet they obeyed not; and because they were resolved not to submit their souls to God's commandments, they would not so much as *incline their ears* to them, but got as far as they could out of call; they walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart; followed their own inventions; every man did as his fancy and humour led him, right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, both in their devotions, and in their conversations; see chap. vii. 24.

And what then can they expect, but to fall under the curse of the covenant, since they would not comply with the commands and conditions of it? Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, i. e. all the threatenings contained in it, because they did not what they were commanded. Note, The words of the covenant shall not fall to the ground. If we do not by our obedience qualify ourselves for the blessings of it, we shall by our disobedience bring ourselves under the curses of it.

And that which aggravated their defection from God and rebellion against him was, that it was general, and as it were by consent, ver. 9, 10: Jeremiah himself saw that many lived in open disobedience to God: but the Lord told him the matter was worse than he thought of; a conspiracy is found among them, by him whose eye is upon the hidden works of darkness.

There is a combination against God and religion, a dangerous design formed to overthrow God's government, and bring in the pretenders, the counterfeit deities. This intimates, that they were *willful and deliberate* in wickedness; they rebelled against God, not through incogitancy, but presumptuously, and with a high hand; that they were *subtle and ingenious* in wickedness, and carried on their plot against religion with a great deal of art and management; that they were *linked together* in the design; and, as is usual among conspirators, engaged to stand by one another in it, and to live and die together; they were resolved to go through with it. A cursed conspiracy! O that there were not the like in our day! Observe, (1.) What the conspiracy was: they designed to overthrow divine revelation, and set that aside, and persuade people not to hear, nor to heed the words of God. They did all they could to derogate from the authority of the scriptures, and to lessen the value of them: they designed to draw people after other gods to serve them, to consult them as their oracles, and make court to them as their benefactors. Human reason shall be their god, a light within their god, an infallible judge their god, saints and angels their gods, the god of this or the other nation shall be their's: thus under several disguises they are in the same confederacy against the Lord and against his anointed. (2.) Who were in the conspiracy; one would have expected to find some foreigners ringleaders in it. No, (1.) The inhabitants of Jerusalem are in conspiracy with the men of Judah; city and country agree in this, however they may differ in other things. (2.) Those of this generation seem to be in conspiracy with those of the foregoing generation, to carry on the war from age to age against religion; They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, and are risen up in their stead, a seed of evil-doers, an increase of sinful men, Num. xxxii. 14. In Josiah's time there had been a reformation, but after his death they returned to their idolatries which then they had renounced. (3.) Judah and Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes and the two, that were often at daggers-drawing one with another, yet were in a conspiracy to break the covenant God had made with their fathers, even with the heads of all the twelve tribes. The house of Israel began the revolt, but the house of Judah soon came into the conspiracy. Now what else could be expected, but that God should take severe methods, both for the chastising of these conspirators, and the crushing of this conspiracy? for none ever hardened his heart thus against God and prospered. He that rolleth this stone it will return upon him.

11. ¶ Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. 12. Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble. 13. For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal. 14. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble. 15. What hath my beloved to do in mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest. 16. The LORD called thy name, A green olive-tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. 17. For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger, in offering incense unto Baal.

This paragraph which contains so much of God's wrath, might very well be expected to follow upon that which goes next before, which contained so much of his people's sin. When God found so much evil among them, we cannot think it strange if it follows, *Therefore I will bring evil upon them*, ver. 11. the evil of punishment for the evil of sin, and there is no remedy, nor relief; the decree is gone forth, and the sentence will be executed.

1. They cannot help themselves, but will be found too weak to contest with God's judgments; it is evil which they shall not be able to escape, or to go forth out of; by any evasion whatsoever. Note, Those that will not submit to God's government, shall not be able to escape his wrath. There is no fleeing from his justice, no avoiding his cognizance. Evil pursues sinners, and entangles them in snares out of which they cannot extricate themselves.

2. Their God will not help them, his providence shall no way favour them, though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. In their affliction they will seek the God whom before they slighted, and cry to him whom before they would not vouchsafe to speak to. But how can they expect to speed? For he has plainly told us, that he that turns away his ears from hearing the law, as they did, ver. 8. for they inclined not their ear, even their prayer, shall be an abomination to him, as the word of the Lord was now to them a reproach.

3. Their idols shall not help them, ver. 12. They shall go and cry to the gods to whom they now offer incense, and put them in mind of the costly services wherewith they had honoured them, expecting they should now have relief from them, but in vain: they shall be sent to the gods whom they served, Judges x. 4. Deut. xxxii. 37, 38. and what the better? They shall not save them at all, shall do nothing towards their salvation, nor give them any prospect of it; they shall not afford them the least comfort, or relief, or mitigation of their trouble. It is God only that is a friend at need, a present powerful help in time of trouble. The idols cannot help themselves, how then should they help their worshippers? Those that make idols of the world and the flesh will in vain have recourse to them in a day of distress. If the idols could have done any real kindness to their worshippers, they would have done it for this people, who had renounced the true God to embrace them, had multiplied them according to the number of their cities, ver. 13. nay, in Jerusalem, according to the number of their streets, suspecting both their sufficiency and their readiness to help them, they must have many, lest a few would not serve; they must have their dispersed in every corner, lest they should be out of the way when they had occasion for them. In Jerusalem, the city which God had chosen to put his

(2.) He brings in the people sadly lamenting their calamities, *ver. 19.* *Woe is me for my hurt!* Some make this the prophet's own lamentation, not for himself, but for the calamities and desolations of his country: He mourned for those that would not be persuaded to mourn for themselves; and since there were none that had so much sense as to join with him, he *weeps in secret*, and cries out, *Woe is me!* In mournful times, it becomes us to be of a mournful spirit. But it may be taken as the language of the people, considered as a body, and therefore speaking as a single person. It is what *they should say*; the prophet puts these words into their mouths: whether they would say them or no, they should have cause to say them: Some among them would thus bewail themselves, and all of them at last would be forced to do it.

1. They lament it, that the affliction is very great, and it is very hard to them to bear it; the more hard, because they had not been used to trouble, and now did not expect it; *Woe is me for my hurt*; not for what I fear, but for what I feel; for they are not, as some are, *worse frightened than hurt*. Nor is it a slight hurt, but a wound, a wound that is grievous, very painful, and very threatening.

2. That there is *no remedy but patience*; they cannot help themselves, but must sit still and abide it. *But I said*, when I was about to complain of my wound, to what purpose is it to complain? *This is a grief, and I must bear it* as well as I can. This is the language rather of a *fallen* than a *gracious* submission; of a patience *per force*, not a patience by principle. When I am in affliction, I should say, this is an evil, and I will bear it, because it is the will of God I should, because his wisdom has appointed this for me, and his grace will make it work for good to me. This is *receiving evil* at the hand of God, *Job ii. 10.* But to say, this is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it, is but a brutal patience, and argues a want of those good thoughts of God which we should always have, even under our afflictions; saying, not only God can and will do what he pleaseth, but *let him do what he pleaseth*.

3. That the country was quite ruined and wasted, *ver. 20.* *My tabernacle is spoiled.* Jerusalem, though a strong city, now proves as weak and moveable as a tabernacle: Their government is dissolved, and their state fallen to pieces, like a tabernacle or tent when it is taken down, and *all its cords*, that should keep it together, are *broken*. Or, by the tabernacle here may be meant the temple, the sanctuary, which at first was but a tabernacle, and is now called so, as then it was sometimes called a temple. Their church is ruined, and all the supports of it fail. It was a general destruction of church and state, city and country: and there were none to repair those desolations. *My children are gone forth of me*; some are fled, others slain, others carried into captivity, so that as to me *they are not*. I am like to be an outcast, and to perish for want of shelter; for *there is none to stretch forth my tent any more*, none of my children that used to do it for me; *none to set up my curtains*, none to do me any service. *Jerusalem has none to guide her of all her sons*, *Jer. li. 18.*

4. That the rulers took no care, nor any proper measures for the redress of their grievance, and the re-establishing of their ruined state, *ver. 21.* *The pastors are become brutish.* When the tents, the shepherds' tents, were spoiled, *ver. 20.* it concerned the shepherds to look after them, but they were *foolish shepherds*. Their kings and princes had no regard at all to the public welfare, seemed to have no sense of the desolations of the land, but were quite belotted and infatuated. The priests, the pastors of God's tabernacle, did a great deal towards the ruin of religion, but nothing towards the repair of it. They are *brutish* indeed, for *they have not sought the Lord*, they have neither made their peace with him nor their prayer to him; they had no eye to him and his providence in their management of affairs; they neither acknowledged the judgment, nor expected the deliverance to come from his hand. Note, Those are brutish people that do not seek the Lord, that live without prayer, and live without God in the world. Every man is either a *faint* or a *brute*. But it is sad indeed with a people, when their pastors, that should feed them with knowledge and understanding, are themselves thus brutish. And what comes of it? *Therefore they shall not prosper*; none of their attempts for the public safety shall succeed. Note, Those cannot expect to prosper, who do not by faith and prayer take God along with them in all their ways. And when the *pastors are brutish*, what else can be expected but that *all their flocks should be scattered*? for *if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch*. The ruin of a people is often owing to the *brutishness* of their pastors.

5. That the report of the enemy's approach was very dreadful, *ver. 22.* *The noise of the bruit is come*, i. e. of the report which at first was but whispered and bruited abroad, as wanting confirmation: It now proves too true, there is a *great commotion* arising out of the north country, which threatens to make all the cities of Judah *desolate*, and a *den of dragons*; for they must all expect to be sacrificed to the avarice and fury of the Chaldean army. And what else can that place expect, but to be made a *den of dragons*, which has by sin made itself a *den of thieves*?

(3.) He turns to God, and addresseth himself to him, finding it to little purpose to speak to the people. It is some comfort to poor ministers, that if men will not hear them, God will; and to him they have liberty of access at all times. Let them close their preaching with prayer, as the prophet, and then they shall have no reason to say they have *laboured in vain*.

6. The prophet here acknowledgeth the sovereignty and dominion of the divine providence, that by it, and not by their own will and wisdom, the affairs both of nations and particular persons are directed and determined, *ver. 23.* This is an article of our faith, which it is very proper for us to make confession of at the throne of grace, when we are complaining of an affliction or suing for a mercy. *O Lord, I know and believe, that the way of man is not in himself.* Nebuchadnezzar did not come of himself against our land, but by the direction of a divine providence. We cannot of ourselves do any thing for our own relief, unless God work with us and command deliverance for us; for *it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*, though he seem in his walking to be perfectly at liberty, and to choose his own way. Those that had promised themselves a long enjoyment of their estates and possessions, when they were thrown out by the Chaldeans, were made to know by sad experience, that *the way of man is not in himself*; the designs which men lay deep, and think well formed, are dashed to pieces in a moment. We must all apply this to ourselves, and mix faith with it; that we are not at our own dispose, but under a divine direction; the event is often over-ruled quite contrary to our intention and expectation. We are not masters of our own way, nor can we think that every thing should be *according to our mind*; we must therefore refer ourselves to God, and acquiesce in his will. Some think the prophet mentions this here with design to make this comfortable use of it, that the way of the Chaldean army being not in themselves, they can do no more than God permits them; he can set bounds to these proud waves, and say, *hitherto they shall come, and no farther*. And a quieting consideration it is, that the most formidable enemies have *no power against us but what is given them from above*.

2. He deprecates the divine wrath, that it might not fall upon God's Israel, *ver. 24.* He speaks not for himself only, but on the behalf of his peo-

ple; *O Lord, correct me, but with judgment*, i. e. in measure and with moderation, and in wisdom, no more than is necessary for the driving out of the foolishness that is bound up in our hearts: *Not in thine anger*; how severe soever the correction be, let it come from thy love, and be designed for our good, and made to work for good; not to *bring us to nothing*, but to bring us home to thyself. Let it not be according to the desert of our sins, but according to the designs of thy grace. Note, 1. We cannot pray in faith that we may never be corrected, while we are conscious to ourselves that we need it and deserve it, and know that as many as God loves he chastens. 2. The great thing we should dread in affliction is the wrath of God. Say not, *Lord, do not correct me*, but, *Lord, do not correct me in anger*; for that will infuse wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery; that will *bring us to nothing*; we may bear the smart of his rod, but we cannot bear the weight of his wrath.

3. He imprecates the divine wrath against the oppressors and persecutors of Israel, *ver. 25.* *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not.* This prayer doth not come from a spirit of malice or revenge, nor is it intended to prescribe to God whom he should execute his judgments upon, or in what order: But, (1.) It is an appeal to his justice; *q. d.* Lord, we are a provoking people, but are there not other nations that are more so? And shall we only be punished? We are thy children, and may expect a fatherly correction; but they are thine enemies, and against them we have reason to think thine indignation should be, not against us. This is God's usual method: *The cup put into the hands of God's people is full of mixtures*, mixtures of mercy; but the dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked of the earth, let them wring them out, *Psal. lxxv. 8.* (2.) It is a prediction of God's judgments upon all the impenitent enemies of his church and kingdom. *If judgment begin thus at the house of God*, what shall be the end of those that obey not his gospel? 1. Peter iv. 17. See how the heathen are described, on whom God's fury shall be poured out. (1.) They are *strangers* to God, and are content to be so. They *know him not*, nor desire to know him. They are *families* that live without prayer, that have nothing of religion among them; they *call not on God's name*: And those that *restrain prayer*, it is an evidence they *know not God*; for they that know him will seek to him, and intreat his favour. (2.) They are *persecutors* of the people of God, and are resolved to be so. They have *eaten up Jacob*, with as much greediness, as those that are hungry eat their necessary food: nay, with more, for they never know when they have enough; they have *devoured him and consumed him*, and made his habitation *desolate*, i. e. the land in which he lives; or the temple of God, which is his habitation among them. Note, What the heathen in their rage and malice do against the people of God, though therein he makes use of them as the instruments of his correction, yet he will for that make them the objects of his indignation. This prayer is taken from *Psal. lxxix. 6, 7.*

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter, (1.) God by the prophet puts the people in mind of the covenant he had made with their fathers; and how much he had insisted upon it, as the condition of the covenant, that they should be obedient to him, *ver. 1—7.* (2.) He chargeth it upon them, that they, in succession to their fathers, and in confederacy among themselves, had obstinately refused to obey him, *ver. 8—10.* (3.) He threatens to punish them with utter ruin for their disobedience, especially for their idolatry, *ver. 11—13.* and tells them, that their idols should not save them, *ver. 12.* that their prophets should not pray for them, *ver. 14.* and justifies his proceedings herein, they having brought all this mischief upon themselves by their own folly and wilfulness, *ver. 15—17.* (4.) Here is an account of a conspiracy formed against Jeremiah by his fellow-citizens, the men of Anathoth; God's discovery of it to him, *ver. 18, 19.* His prayer against them, *ver. 20.* and a prediction of God's judgments upon them for it, *ver. 21—23.*

1. **T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; 3. And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, 4. Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God: 5. That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD, 6. Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. 7. For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. 8. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not. 9. And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

The prophet here as prosecutor in God's name draws up an indictment against the Jews, for wilful disobedience to the commands of the rightful sovereign. And for the more solemn management of his charge.

1. He produceth the commission he had to draw up the charge against them:

them: he did not take pleasure in accusing the children of his people, but God commanded him to *speake it to the men of Judah*, ver. 1. 2. In the original it is plural, *speake ye this*; for what he said to Jeremiah was the same that he gave in charge to all his servants the prophets. They none of them said any other, but what Moses in the law had said; to that therefore they must refer themselves, and direct the people, *Hear the words of this covenant*; turn to your Bibles, be judged by them. Jeremiah must now *proclaim this* in the cities of Judah, and the streets of Jerusalem, that all may hear, for all are concerned. All the words for reproof and conviction, which the prophets spake, were grounded upon the *words of the covenant*, and agreed with that; and therefore *hear these words*, and understand by them upon what terms you stood with God at first; and then by comparing yourselves with the covenant, you will soon be aware upon what terms you now stand with him.

2. He opens the charter upon which their state was founded, and by which they held their privileges. They had forgotten the tenor of it, and lived as if they thought the grant was absolute. and that they might do what they pleased, and yet have what God had promised; or as if they thought the keeping up the ceremonial observances was all that God required of them. He therefore shews them with all possible plainness, that the thing God insisted upon was *obedience*, that was *better than sacrifice*. He said, *Obey my voice*, ver. 4. and again, ver. 7. *Obey my voice*. Own God for your master, give up yourselves to him as his subjects and servants: attend to all the declarations of his mind and will, and make conscience of complying with them. *Do my commandments*, not only in some things, but *according to all which I command you*; make conscience of moral duties especially, and rest not in those that are merely ritual: *Hear the words of the covenant, and do them*.

(1.) This was the original contract between God and them, when he first formed them into a people. It was what he *commanded their fathers*, when he first brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, ver. 4. and again, ver. 7. He never intended to take them under his conduct and protection upon any other terms. This was it that he required from them, in gratitude for the great things he did for them when he brought them from the iron furnace. Therefore he redeemed them out of the service of the Egyptians, which was perfect slavery, that he might take them into his own service, which is perfect freedom, Luke i. 74, 75.

(2.) This was not only laid before them then, but it was with the greatest importunity imaginable pressed upon them, ver. 7. God not only commanded, but *earnestly protested* it to their fathers, when he brought them into covenant with himself. Moses inculcated it again and again, by precept upon precept, and line upon line.

(3.) This was made the condition of the relation between them and God, which was so much their honour and privilege: *So shall ye be my people, and I will be your God*; I will own you for mine, and you may call upon me as your's; which intimates, that if they refused to obey, they could no longer claim the benefit of the relation.

(4.) It was upon these terms that the land of Canaan was given them for a possession: *Obey my voice, that I may perform the oath sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey*, ver. 5. God was ready to fulfil the promise, but then they must fulfil the condition; if not, the promise is void, and it is just with God to turn them out of possession. Being brought in upon their good behaviour, they had no wrong done them if they were turned out upon their ill behaviour. *Obedience* was the rent reserved by the lease, with a power to re-enter for non-payment.

(5.) This obedience was not only made a condition of the blessing, but was required under the penalty of a curse. This is mentioned first here, ver. 3. that they might if possible be awakened by the terrors of the Lord. *Cursed be the man*, though it were but a single person, *that obeys not the words of this covenant*; much more when it is the body of the nation that rebels. There are curses of the covenant as well as blessings; and Moses set before them not only *life and good*, but *death and evil*, Deut. xxx. 15. So that they had fair warning given them of the fatal consequences of disobedience.

(6.) Lest this covenant should be forgotten, and because out of mind should be thought out of date, God had from time to time called to them to remember it, and by his servants the prophets had made a continual claim of this rent; so that they could not plead in excuse of their non-payment, that it had never been demanded; from the day he brought them out of Egypt to this day (and that was near 1000 years) he had been, in one way or other, at sundry times and in divers manners, *protesting to them* the necessity of obedience. God keeps an account how long we have enjoyed the means of grace, and how powerful those means have been; how often we have been not only spoken to, but *protested to*, concerning our duty.

(7.) This covenant was confirmed to, ver. 5. *Then answered I, and said, Amen, so be it, O Lord*. These are the words of the prophet, expressing either, (1.) His own consent to the covenant for himself, and his desire to have the benefit of it. God promised Canaan to the obedient; Lord, saith he, I take thee at thy word, I will be obedient; let me have mine inheritance in the land of promise, of which Canaan is a type. Or, (2.) His good will and good wish, that his people might have the benefit of it; *Amen*. Lord, let them still be kept in possession of this good land, and not turned out of it; make good the promise to them. Or, (3.) His people's consent to the covenant; then answered I, in the name of the people, *So be it*. Taking it in this sense, it refers to the declared consent which the people gave to the covenant, not only to the precepts of it, when they said, *All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient*; but to the penalties, when they said *Amen* to all the curses upon mount Ebal. The more solemnly we have engaged ourselves to God, the more reason we have to hope that it will be perpetual; and yet here it did not prove so.

3. He chargeth them with breach of covenant, such a breach as amounted to a forfeiture of their charter, ver. 8. God had said again and again, by his law and by his prophets, *Obey my voice*, do as you are bidden, and all shall be well; yet they obeyed not; and because they were resolved not to submit their souls to God's commandments, they would not so much as *incline their ears* to them, but got as far as they could out of call; they walked everyone in the imagination of their evil heart; followed their own inventions; every man did as his fancy and humour led him, right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, both in their devotions, and in their conversations; see chap. vii. 24. And what then can they expect, but to fall under the curse of the covenant, since they would not comply with the commands and conditions of it? Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, i. e. all the threatenings contained in it, because they did not what they were commanded. Note, The words of the covenant shall not fall to the ground. If we do not by our obedience qualify ourselves for the blessings of it, we shall by our disobedience bring ourselves under the curses of it.

And that which aggravated their defection from God and rebellion against him was, that it was general, and as it were by consent, ver. 9, 10. Jeremiah himself saw that many lived in open disobedience to God: but the Lord told him the matter was worse than he thought of; *a conspiracy is found among them*, by him whose eye is upon the hidden works of darkness.

There is a combination against God and religion, a dangerous design formed to overthrow God's government, and bring in the pretenders, the counterfeit deities. This intimates, that they were *wilful and deliberate* in wickedness; they rebelled against God, not through incoherence, but premeditatedly, and with a high hand; that they were *subtle and ingenious* in wickedness, and carried on their plot against religion with a great deal of art and management; that they were *linked together* in the design; and, as is usual among conspirators, engaged to stand by one another in it, and to live and die together; they were resolved to go through with it. A cursed conspiracy! O that there were not the like in our day! Observe, (1.) What the conspiracy was: they designed to overthrow divine revelation, and set that aside, and persuade people not to *hear*, nor to *heed the words of God*. They did all they could to derogate from the authority of the scriptures, and to lessen the value of them: they designed to draw people after other gods to serve them, to consult them as their oracles, and make court to them as their benefactors. Human reason shall be their god, a light within their god, an infallible judge their god, saints and angels their gods, the god of this or the other nation shall be their's: thus under several disguises they are in the same confederacy against the Lord and against his anointed. (2.) Who were in the conspiracy; one would have expected to find some foreigners ring-leaders in it. No, (1.) The inhabitants of Jerusalem are in conspiracy with the men of Judah; city and country agree in this, however they may differ in other things. (2.) Those of this generation seem to be in conspiracy with those of the foregoing generation, to carry on the war from age to age against religion; They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, and are risen up in their stead, a seed of evil-doers, an increase of sinful men, Numb. xxxii. 14. In Josiah's time there had been a reformation, but after his death they returned to their idolatries which then they had renounced. (3.) Judah and Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes and the two, that were often at daggers-drawing one with another, yet were in a conspiracy to break the covenant God had made with their fathers, even with the heads of all the twelve tribes. The house of Israel began the revolt, but the house of Judah soon came into the conspiracy. Now what else could be expected, but that God should take severe methods, both for the chastising of these conspirators, and the crushing of this conspiracy? for none ever hardened his heart thus against God and prospered. He that rolleth this stone it will return upon him.

11. ¶ Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. 12. Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble. 13. For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal. 14. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble. 15. What hath my beloved to do in mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest. 16. The LORD called thy name, A green olive-tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. 17. For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger, in offering incense unto Baal.

This paragraph which contains so much of God's wrath, might very well be expected to follow upon that which goes next before, which contained so much of his people's sin. When God found so much evil among them, we cannot think it strange if it follows, *Therefore I will bring evil upon them*, ver. 11. the evil of punishment for the evil of sin, and there is no remedy, nor relief: the decree is gone forth, and the sentence will be executed.

1. They cannot help themselves, but will be found too weak to contest with God's judgments; it is evil which they shall not be able to escape, or to go forth out of; by any evasion whatsoever. Note, Those that will not submit to God's government, shall not be able to escape his wrath. There is no fleeing from his justice, no avoiding his cognisance. Evil pursues sinners, and entangles them in snares out of which they cannot extricate themselves.

2. Their God will not help them, his providence shall no way favour them, though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. In their affliction they will seek the God whom before they slighted, and cry to him whom before they would not vouchsafe to speak to. But how can they expect to speed? For he has plainly told us, that he that turns away his ears from hearing the law, as they did, ver. 8. for they inclined not their ear, even their prayer, shall be an abomination to him, as the word of the Lord was now to them a reproach.

3. Their idols shall not help them, ver. 12. They shall go and cry to the gods to whom they now offer incense, and put them in mind of the costly services wherewith they had honoured them, expecting they should now have relief from them, but in vain: they shall be sent to the gods whom they served, Judges x. 4. Deut. xxxii. 37, 38. and what the better? They shall not save them at all, shall do nothing towards their salvation, nor give them any prospect of it; they shall not afford them the least comfort, or relief, or mitigation of their trouble. It is God only that is a friend at need, a present powerful help in time of trouble. The idols cannot help themselves, how then should they help their worshippers? Those that make idols of the world and the flesh will in vain have recourse to them in a day of distress. If the idols could have done any real kindness to their worshippers, they would have done it for this people, who had renounced the true God to embrace them, had multiplied them according to the number of their cities, ver. 13. nay, in Jerusalem, according to the number of their streets, suspecting both their sufficiency and their readiness to help them, they must have many, lest a few would not serve; they must have them dispersed in every corner, lest they should be out of the way when they had occasion for them. In Jerusalem, the city which God had chosen to put

his name, there, publicly in the streets of Jerusalem, in every street they had altars to that shameful thing, that *flame*, even to Baal, which they ought to have been ashamed of, with which they did reproach the Lord, and bring confusion upon themselves. But now in their distress their many gods, and many altars, should stand them in no stead. Note, Those that will not be ashamed of their commission of sin as a wicked thing, will be ashamed of their expectations from sin as a fruitless thing.

4. *Jeremiah's prayers shall not help them.* ver. 14. what God had said to him before, chap. vii. 16. he here saith again, *pray not thou for this people.* This is not designed for a command to the prophet, so much as for a threatening to the people, that they should have no benefit by the prayers of their friends for them. God would give no encouragement to the prophets to pray for them, would not stir up the spirit of prayer, but cast a damp upon it; would put it into their hearts to pray, not for the body of the people, but for the remnant among them; to pray for their eternal salvation, not for their deliverance from the temporal judgments that were coming upon them; and what other prayers were put up for them should not be heard. Those are in a sad case indeed that are cut off from the benefit of prayers: *I will not hear them when they cry,* and therefore do not thou pray for them. Note, Those that have so far thrown themselves out of God's favour, that he will not hear their prayers, cannot expect benefit by the prayers of others for them.

5. *The profession they make of religion shall stand them in no stead,* ver. 15. They were originally God's beloved, his spouse, he was married to them by the covenant of peculiarity, even the believing Jews are said to be *beloved for the father's sake*, Rom. xi. 28. As such they had a place in God's house, they were admitted to worship in the courts of the temple, they did partake of God's altar, did eat of the flesh of their peace-offerings, here called the *holy flesh*, which God had the honour of, and they had the comfort of. This they gloried in, and trusted to: What harm could come to those who were God's beloved, who were under the protection of his house? Even when they did evil, yet they rejoiced and gloried in this, made a mighty noise of this: And when their evil was, so the margin reads it, when trouble came upon them they rejoiced in this, and made this their confidence: But their confidence would deceive them, for God has rejected it, they themselves having forfeited the privileges they so much boasted of: They have wrought themselves with many, have been guilty of spiritual whoredom, have worshipped many idols. And therefore, (1.) God's temple will yield them no protection: it is fit the adulteress, especially when she has so often repeated her whoredoms, and is grown so impudent in them and irreclaimable, should be put away and turned out of doors; *What has my beloved to do in my house?* She is a scandal to it, and therefore it shall no longer be a shelter to her. (2.) God's altar will yield them no satisfaction, nor can they expect any comfort from that: *the holy flesh is passed from them*, i. e. an end will soon be put to thy sacrifices, when the temple shall be laid in ruins; and where then will the holy flesh be, thou art so proud of? A holy heart will be a comfort to us when the *holy flesh is passed from us*: an inward principle of grace will make up the want of the outward means of grace: But woe unto us if the departure of the *holy flesh* be accompanied with the departure of the *Holy Spirit*!

6. *God's former favours to them shall stand them in no stead,* ver. 16, 17. Their remembrance of them shall be no comfort to them under their troubles, and God's remembrance of them shall be no argument for their relief. (1.) It is true God had done great things for them; that people had been the favourites above any people under the sun, they had been the darlings of heaven: God had called Israel's name a green olive-tree, and had made them so, for he miscalls nothing; he had planted them, ver. 17. had formed them into a people, with all the advantages they could have to make them a fruitful and flourishing people, so good was their law, and so good was their land. One would think no other, but that a people so planted, so watered, so cultivated, should be, as the olive-tree is, ever green, in respect both of piety and prosperity, Psal. lii. 9. God called them fair, and of goodly fruit; both good for food, and pleasant to the eye; both amiable and ferocious to God and man, for with the greenness and fatness of the olive both are honoured, Judg. ix. 9. (2.) It is as true that they have done ill things against God: he had planted them a green olive, a good olive, but they were degenerated into a wild olive, Rom. xi. 17. Both the house of Israel and the house of Judah had done evil, had provoked God to anger in burning incense unto Baal, setting up other mediators between them and the supreme God, beside the promised Messiah; nay, setting up other gods in competition with the true and living God, for they had gods many, as well as lords many. (3.) When they have carried themselves thus, they can expect no other but that, notwithstanding what good he hath done to them, and designed for them, he should now bring upon them the evil he had pronounced against them. He that made them will not save them. He that planted this green olive-tree, and expected fruit from it, finding it barren and grown wild, hath kindled fire upon it, to burn it as it stands, for being without fruit, it is twice dead, plucked up by the roots, Jude 12. it is cut down, and cast into the fire, the fittest place for trees that cumber the ground, Matt. iii. 10. The branches of it, the high and lusty boughs, so the word signifies, are broken, are broken down, both princes and priests cut off. And thus it proves, that the evil done against God to provoke him to anger is really done against themselves, they wrong their own souls; God is out of their reach, but they ruin themselves. See chap. vii. 19. Note, Every sin against God is a sin against ourselves, and so it will be found, sooner or later.

18. ¶ And the LORD hath given me knowledge of it, and I do know it: then thou shewedst me their doings. 19. But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered. 20. But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that tricest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause. 21. Therefore thus saith the LORD of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Prophecy not in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand: 22. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold I will punish them: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine: 23. And there shall be no remnant of them: for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation.

The prophet Jeremiah hath much in his writings concerning himself, much more than Isaiah had, the times he lived in being very troublesome. Here we have (as it should seem) the beginning of his sorrows, which arose from those of his own city, Anathoth, a priest's city, and yet a malignant one. Observe here,

1. Their plot against him, ver. 19. They devised devices against him, laid their heads together to contrive how they might be in the most plausible and effectual manner the death of him. Malice is ingenious in its devices, as well as industrious in its persecutions. They said concerning Jeremiah, *Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof*; a proverbial expression: Let us utterly destroy him root and branch: Let us destroy both the father and the family, as when Naboth was put to death for treason, his sons were put to death with him. Or rather, both the prophet and the prophecy: let us kill the one, and defeat the other: *Let us cut him off from the land of the living*, as a false prophet, and load him with ignominy and disgrace, that his name may be no more remembered with respect. Let us sink his reputation, and so spoil the credit of his predictions. This was their plot: and, (1.) It was a barbarous one; but so cruel have the persecutors of God's prophets been: they hunt for no less than the previous life, and very precious the lives are that they hunt for. But, (2.) It was a baffled one. They thought to put an end to his days, but he survived most of his enemies; they thought to blot his memory; but it lives to this day, and will be blessed while time lasts.

2. The information which God gave him of this conspiracy against him. He knew nothing of it himself, so artfully had they concealed it; he came to Anathoth, meaning no harm to them, and therefore fearing no harm from them, like a lamb or an ox, that thinks he is driven as usual to the field, when he is brought to the slaughter: so little did poor Jeremiah dream of the design his citizens that hated him had upon him: None of his friends could, and none of his enemies would, give him any notice of his danger, that he might shift for his own safety; as Paul's sister's son gave him intelligence of the Jews that were lying in wait for him. There is but a step between Jeremiah and death: but then the Lord hath given him knowledge of it by dream, or vision, or impression upon his spirit, that he might save himself, as the king of Israel did, upon the notice Elisha gave him, 2 Kings vi. 10. Thus he came to know it, God shows him their doings; and such was their device, that the discovering them was the defeating of them. If God had not let him know his own danger, it would have been improved by unreasonable men against the reputation of his predictions; that he, who foretold the ruin of this country, could not foresee his own peril, and avoid it. See what care God takes of his prophets; he suffers no man to do them wrong; all the rage of their enemies cannot prevail to take them off till they have finished their testimony. God knows all the secret designs of his and his people's enemies, and can when he pleases make them know: *A bird of the air shall carry the voice.*

3. His appeal to God hereupon, ver. 20. His eye is to God as the Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously. It is matter of comfort to us, when men deal unjustly with us, that we have a God to go to, who doth and will plead the cause of injured innocency, and appear against the injurious. God's justice, which is a terror to the wicked, is a comfort to the godly. His eye is to him, as the God that tries the reins and the heart; that perfectly sees what is in man, what are his thoughts and intents. He knew the integrity that was in Jeremiah's heart, and that he was not the man they represented him to be. He knew the wickedness that was in their hearts, though never so cunningly concealed and disguised. Now, (1.) He prays judgment against them, *Let me see thy vengeance on them*, i. e. do justice between me and them in such a way as thou pleasest. Some think there was something of human frailty in this prayer of his; at least Christ has taught us another lesson, both by his precept and pattern, which is, to pray for our persecutors. Others think it comes from a pure zeal for the glory of God, and a pious, prophetic indignation against men that were by profession priests, the Lord's ministers, and yet were so desperately wicked, as to fly out against one that did them no harm, purely for the service he did to God. This petition was a prediction that he should see God's vengeance on them. (2.) He refers himself entirely to the judgment of God: *Unto thee have I revealed my cause*, i. e. To thee have I committed it, not desiring or expecting to interest any other in it. Note, It is our comfort when we are wronged, that we have a God to commit our cause to; and our duty to commit it to him, with a resolution to acquiesce in his definitive sentence, to subscribe and not prescribe to him.

4. Judgment given against his persecutors, the men of Anathoth. It was to no purpose for him to appeal to the courts at Jerusalem, he could not have right done him there; the priests there would stand by the priests at Anathoth, and rather second them than discountenance them; but God will take therefore cognizance of the cause himself, and we are sure his judgment is according to truth.

Here is, 1. The crime recited, on which the sentence is grounded, ver. 21. They sought the prophet's life, for they forbid him to prophecy upon pain of death: they were resolved either to silence him or slay him. The provocation he gave them was his prophesying in the name of the Lord, without licence from them that were the governors of the city which he was a member of; and not prophesying such smooth things as they always bespoke. Their forbidding him to prophecy, was in effect seeking his life; for it was seeking to defeat the end and business of his life, and to rob him of the comfort of it. It is as bad to God's faithful ministers to have their mouth stopped, as to have their breath stopped. But especially when it was resolved, that if he did prophecy, as certainly he would, notwithstanding their inhibition, he should die by their hand; they would be executioners, judges, executioners, and all. It is used to be said, that a prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem, for there the great council sat; but so bitter were the men of Anathoth against Jeremiah, that they would undertake to be the death of him themselves. A prophet then shall find not only no honour, but no favour in his own country.

2. The sentence passed upon them for this crime, ver. 22, 23. God said, *I will punish them*; let me alone to deal with them, *I will visit this upon them*, so the word is; God will enquire into it, and reckon for it. Two of God's four sore judgments shall serve to ruin their town: the sword shall devour their young men, though they were young priests, not men of war; their character shall not be their protection; and famine shall destroy the children, sons and daughters, that tarry at home; which is a more grievous death than that by the sword, Lam. iv. 9. The destruction shall be final, ver. 23. there shall be no remnant of them left, none to be the seed of another generation: they sought Jeremiah's life, and therefore they shall die; they will destroy him root and branch, that his name might be no more remembered, and therefore there shall be no remnant of them; and herein the Lord is righteous. Thus evil is brought upon them, even the year of their visitation; and that is evil enough, a recompence according to their deserts. Then shall Jeremiah see his desires upon his enemies. Note, Their condition is sad, that have the prayers of good ministers and good people against them.

C H A P. XII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The prophet's humble complaint to God of the success that wicked people had in their wicked practices, ver. 1, 2. and his appeal to God concerning his own integrity, ver. 3. with a prayer, that God would for the sake of the public bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end, ver. 3, 4. (2.) God's rebuke to the prophet for his uneasiness at his present troubles, bidding him prepare for greater, ver. 5, 6. (3.) A sad lamentation of the present deplorable state of the Israel of God, ver. 7—13. (4.) An intimation of mercy to God's people, in a denunciation of wrath against their neighbours that helped forward their affliction, that they should be plucked out; but with a promise, that if they would at last join themselves with the people of God, they should come in shavers with them in their privileges, ver. 14—17.

1. **R**IGHTEOUS art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? 2. Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins. 3. But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter. 4. How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end. 5. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? 6. For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

The prophet doubts not but it would be of use to others, to know what had passed between God and his soul; what temptations he had been assaulted with, and how he had got over them: And therefore he here tells us,

1. What liberty he humbly took, and was graciously allowed him, to reason with God concerning his judgments, ver. 1. He is about to plead with God, not to quarrel with him, or find fault with his proceedings, but to enquire into the meaning of them, that he might more and more be ready to be satisfied in them, and might have wherewith to answer both his own and others' objections against them. The works of the Lord, and the reasons of them, are sought out even of those that have pleasure therein, Psal. cxi. 2. We may not strive with our Maker, but we may reason with him. Now (1.) The prophet lays down a truth of unquestionable certainty, which he resolves to abide by in managing this argument. *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee.* Thus he arms himself against the temptation wherewith he was assaulted, to envy the prosperity of the wicked, before he entered into a parley with it. Note. When we are most in the dark concerning the meaning of God's dispensations, yet still we must resolve to keep up right thoughts of God, and must be confident of this, that he never did, nor ever will do the least wrong to any of his creatures; even when his judgments are unsearchable as a great deep, and altogether unaccountable, yet his righteousness is as conspicuous and unmoveable as the great mountains, Psal. xxxvi. 6. Though sometimes clouds and darkness are round about him, yet justice and judgment are always the habitation of his throne, Psal. xcvi. 2. When we find it hard to understand particular providences, we must have recourse to general truths as our first principles, and abide by them: however it be, the Lord is righteous; see Psal. lxxiii. 1. And we must acknowledge it to him, as the prophet here, even when we plead with him, as those that have no thoughts of contending but of learning, being fully assured that he will be justified when he speaks. Note. However we may see cause, for our own information, to plead with God, yet it becomes us to own that, whatever he saith or doth, he is in the right.

2. What it was in the dispensations of divine providence that he stumbled at, and that he thought would bear a debate: it was that which has been a temptation to many wise and good men, and such a one as they had hardly got over. (1.) They see the designs and projects of wicked people successful, the way of the wicked prospers: they compass their malicious designs, and gain their point. (2.) They see their affairs and concerns in a good posture; they are happy, as the world can make them, though they deal treacherously, very treacherously, both with God and man. They are hypocrites who are chiefly meant, as appears, ver. 2. who dissemble in their good professions, and depart from their good beginnings, and good promises, and in both they deal treacherously, very treacherously. It has been said, that men cannot expect to prosper who are unjust and dishonest in their dealings; but these deal treacherously, and yet they are happy.

He shows, ver. 2. both their prosperity and their abuse of their prosperity. (1.) God had been very indulgent to them, and they were got beforehand in the world: They are planted in a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and thou hast planted them; nay, thou didst cast out the heathen to plant them, Psal. xlv. 2.—lxxx. 8. Many a tree is planted, that yet never grows or comes to any thing; but they have taken root, their prosperity seems to be confirmed and settled; they take root in the earth, for there they fix themselves, and thence they draw the sap of all their satisfaction. Yet many trees take root which yet never come on; but these grow, yea, they bring forth fruit; their families are built up; they live high, and spend at a great rate; and all this was owing to the benignity of the divine providence which smiled upon them, Psal. lxxiii. 7. (2.) Thus God had favoured them, though they had dealt treacherously with him: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins. This was no uncharitable censure, for he spake by the spirit of prophecy, without which it is not safe to charge men with hypocrisy, whose appearances are plausible. Observe, (1.) Though they cared not for thinking of God, nor had any sincere affection to him, yet they could easily persuade themselves to speak of him frequently, and with an air of seriousness. Piety from the teeth outward is

no difficult thing. Many speak the language of God, that are not God-ites indeed. (2.) Though they had on all occasions the name of God ready in their mouth, and accustomed themselves to those forms of speech that favoured of piety, yet they could not persuade themselves to keep up the fear of God in their hearts. The form of godliness should engage us to keep up the power of it; but with them it did not do so.

3. What comfort he had in appealing to God concerning his own integrity, ver. 3. But thou, O Lord, knowest me. Probably the wicked men he complains of, were forward to reproach and censure him, chap. xviii. 28. in reference to which, this was his comfort, that God was a witness of his integrity. God knew he was not such a one as they were, who had God near in their mouth, but far from their reins; nor such a one as they took him to be, and represented him, a deceiver and a false prophet; they that thus abused him, did not know him, 1 Cor. ii. 8. But thou, O Lord, knowest me, though they think me not worth their notice. (1.) Observe, what the matter is, concerning which he appeals to God, thou knowest my heart towards thee. Note. We are as our hearts are, and our hearts are good or bad, according as they are or are not towards God; and this is that therefore concerning which we should examine ourselves, that we may approve ourselves to God. (2.) The cognisance to which he appeals. Thou knowest me better than I know myself; not by hearsay or report, for thou hast seen me, not with a transient glance, but thou hast tried my heart. God's knowing of us is as clear, and exact, and certain, as if he had made the most strict scrutiny. Note. The God with whom we have to do, perfectly knows how our hearts are towards him. He knows both the guile of the hypocrite, and the sincerity of the upright.

4. He prays that God would turn his hand against these wicked people, and not suffer them to prosper always, though they had prospered long. Let some judgment come to pull them out of this fat pasture as sheep for the slaughter, that it may appear their long prosperity was but like the feeding of lambs in a large place, to prepare them for the day of slaughter, Hos. iv. 16. God suffered them to prosper, that by their pride and luxury they might fill up the measure of their iniquity, and so be opened for destruction; and therefore he thinks it a piece of necessary justice that they should fall into mischief themselves, because they had done so much mischief to others; that they should be pulled out of their land, because they had brought ruin upon the land, and the longer they continued in it, the more hurt they did, as the plagues of their generation, ver. 4. How long shall the land mourn, as it doth under the judgments of God inflicted upon it, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? Lord, shall they prosper themselves that ruin all about them? (1.) See here what the judgment was which the land was now groaning under. The herbs of every field wither, the grass is burnt up, and all the products of the earth fail; and then it follows of course, the beasts are consumed, and the birds, 1 Kings xviii. 5. This was the effect of a long drought, or want of rain, which happened, as it should seem, at the latter end of Josiah's reign, and the beginning of Jehoiakim's, it is mentioned, chap. iii. 3.—viii. 13.—ix. 10—12. and more fully afterwards, chap. xiv.

If they would have been brought to repentance by this lesser judgment, the greater had been prevented. Now, why was it that this fruitful land was turned into barrenness, but for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? Plain evi. 34. Therefore the prophet prays that these wicked people might die for their own sin; and that the whole nation might not suffer for it. (2.) See here what was the language of their wickedness: They said, He shall not see our last end; either God himself shall not: Atheism is the root of hypocrisy, therefore God is far from their reins, though near their mouth, because they say, How doth God know? Psal. lxxiii. 11. Job xxii. 13. he knows not what way we take, nor what it will end in. Or, Jeremiah shall not see our last end; whatever he pretends when he asks us what shall be in the end thereof, he cannot himself foresee it: They look upon him as a false prophet. Or, whatever it is, he shall not live to see it, for we will be the death of him, chap. xi. 21. Note. (1.) Men's setting their later end at a great distance, or looking upon it as uncertain, is at the bottom of all their wickedness, Lam. i. 9. (2.) The whole creation groans under the burden of the sin of man, Rom. viii. 22. It is for this that the earth mourns, so it may be read; cursed is the ground for thy sake.

5. He acquaints us with the answer God gave to those complaints of his, ver. 5, 6. We often find the prophets admonished, whose business it was to admonish others, as Isa. viii. 11. Ministers have lessons to learn, as well as lessons to teach, and must themselves hear God's voice, and preach to themselves. Jeremiah complained much of the wickedness of the men of Anathoth; and that notwithstanding that, they prospered. Now this seems to be an answer to that complaint. (1.) It is allowed that he had cause to complain, ver. 6. Thy brethren, the priests of Anathoth, that are of the house of thy father, who ought to have protected thee, and pretended to do so, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; have been false to thee, and under colour of friendship have deliquently done thee all the mischief they could: they have called a multitude after thee, raised the mob upon thee, and incensed the common people against thee, to whom they have endeavoured, by all arts possible, to render thee despicable or odious, while at the same time they pretended they had no design to persecute thee, or deprive thee of thy liberty: They are indeed such as thou canst not believe, though they speak fair words to thee: They seem to be thy friends, but are really thine enemies. Note. God's faithful servants must not think it at all strange if their foes be those of their own house, Matt. x. 36. and if those they expect kindness from prove such as they can put no confidence in, Mic. vii. 5. (2.) Yet he is told that he carried the matter too far. (1.) He laid the unkindness of his countrymen too much to heart. They wearied him, because it was in a land of peace wherein he trusted, ver. 5. It was very grievous to him to be thus hated and abused by his own kindred: He was disturbed in his mind by it, his spirit was sunk and overwhelmed with it, so that he was in a mighty toils and uneasiness about it: Nay, he was discouraged in his work by it, began to be weary of prophesying, and to think of giving it up. (2.) He did not consider that this was but the beginning of his sorrow, and he had sorer trials yet before him; and whereas he should endeavour by a patient bearing of this trouble to prepare himself for greater, by his uneasiness under this, he did but dislit himself for what further lay before him. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, and run thee quite out of breath, then how wilt thou contend with horses? If the injuries done him by the men of Anathoth made such an impression upon him, what would he do when the princes and chief priests at Jerusalem should set upon him with their power, as they did afterwards? chap. xx. 2.—xxxii. 2. If he was so soon tired in a land of peace, where there was little noise or peril, what would he do in the firelings of Jordan, when that overflows all its banks, and frightens even lions out of their thickets? chap. xlix. 19. Note. (1.) While we are in this world we must expect troubles and difficulties. Our life is a race, a warfare, we are in danger of being run down. (2.) God's usual method being to begin with lesser trials, it is our wisdom to expect greater than any we have yet met with. We may be called out to contend with horsemen, and the sons of Anak may perhaps be reserved for the last encounter. (3.) It highly concerns us to prepare for such trials, and to consider what we should do in them. How shall we preserve our integrity and peace,

peace, when we come to the *swellings of Jordan*? (4.) In order to our preparation for further and greater trials, we are concerned to approve ourselves well in present lesser trials, to keep up our spirits, keep hold of the promise, keep in our way, with our eye upon the prize, so run that we may obtain it.

Some good interpreters understand this as spoken to the people, who were very secure, and fearless of the threatened judgments: If they have been so humbled and impoverished by lesser calamities, wasted by the Assyrians; if the Ammonites and Moabites, that were their *brethren*, and with whom they were *in league*, if these proved false to them, as undoubtedly they would, then how would they be able to deal with such a powerful adversary as the Chaldeans would be? How would they bear up their head against that invasion, which should come like the *swellings of Jordan*?

7. ¶ I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies. 8. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it. 9. Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour. 10. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. 11. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart. 12. The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the *one* end of the land even to the *other* end of the land: no flesh shall have peace. 13. They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit; and they shall be ashamed of your revenues, because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

The people of the Jews are here marked for ruin. 1. God is here brought in *falling out with them*, and *leaving them desolate*; and they could never have been undone if they had not provoked God to desert them. It is a terrible word that God here saith, *ver. 7. I have forsaken my house*, the temple, which had been his palace; they had polluted it, and so forced him out of it. *I have left mine heritage*, and will look after it no more: his people that he hath taken such delight in and care of, are now thrown out of his protection. They had been the *dearly beloved of his soul*, precious in his sight, and honourable above any people; which is mentioned to aggravate their sin, in returning him hatred for his love; and their misery, in throwing themselves out of the favour of one that had such a kindness for them: and to justify God in his dealings with them: he sought not occasion against them, but if they would have carried themselves any thing tolerably, he would have made the best of them, for they were the *beloved of his soul*; but they had carried themselves so that they had provoked him to *give them into the hand of their enemies*, to leave them unguarded, an easy prey to those that bore them ill will. But what was the quarrel God had with a people that had been so long dear to him? why, truly they were degenerated. (1.) They were become like *beasts of prey*, which nobody loves, but every body avoids and gets as far off from as they can. *ver. 8. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest*. Their sins cry to heaven for vengeance as loud as a lion roars. Nay, they cry out against God, in the threatenings and slaughter which they breathe against his prophets that speak to them in his name; and what is said and done against them, God takes as said and done against himself. They blaspheme his name, oppose his authority, and bid defiance to his justice: and so cry out against him as a lion in the forest. They that were the *sheep of God's pasture*, are become barbarous and ravenous, and as ungovernable as lions in the forests, therefore I hated them; for what delight could the God of love take in a people that were now become as *roaring lions and raging beasts*, fit to be taken and shot at, as a vexation and torment to all about them? (2.) They were become like *birds of prey*, and therefore also unworthy a place in God's house, where neither beasts nor birds of prey were admitted to be offered in sacrifice, *ver. 9. Mine heritage is unto me as a bird with talons*, so some read it, and so the margin; they are continually pulling and pecking at one another, they have by their unnatural contentions made their country a cock-pit. Or, as a *speckled bird*, dyed, or sprinkled, or bedewed, with the blood of her prey; the shedding of innocent blood was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, and hastened their ruin; not only as it provoked God against them, but as it provoked their neighbours likewise; for those that have *their hand against every man*, shall have *every man's hand against them*, Gen. xvi. 12. and so it follows here, the *birds round about are against her*. Some make her a *speckled*, pied, or *motley bird*, upon account of their mixing the superstitious customs and usages of the heathen with divine institutions in the worship of God: they were fond of a *party-coloured religion*, and thought it made them fine when really it made them odious. God's turtle-dove is no *speckled bird*.

2. The enemies are here brought in *falling upon them*, and *laying them desolate*. And some think it is upon this account that they are compared to a *speckled bird*, because the fowls use to make a noise about a bird of an odd unusual colour: God's people are among the children of this world as *men wondered at*, as a *speckled bird*; but this people had by their own folly made themselves so; and the *beasts and birds* are called and commissioned to prey upon them. Let *all the birds round be against her*, for God has forsaken her, and with them let *all the beasts of the field come to devour*. Those that have made a prey of others, shall themselves be preyed upon. It did not *lessen* the sin of the nations, but very much *greatened* the misery of Judah and Jerusalem, that the desolation brought upon them was by order from heaven. The *birds and beasts* are perhaps called to feast upon the bodies of the slain, as in St. John's vision, *Rev. xix. 17*.

The utter desolation of the land by the Chaldean army is here spoken of as a thing done, so sure, so near was it. God speaks of it as a thing which he had appointed to be done, and yet which he had no pleasure in, no more than in the death of other sinners.

1. See with what a tender affection he speaks of this land, notwithstanding the sinfulness of it, in remembrance of his covenant, and the tribute of honour and glory he had formerly had from it. It is *my vineyard, my portion, my pleasant portion*, *ver. 10*. Note, God has a kindness and concern for his church, though there be much amiss in it: and his correcting of it will very much consist with his complacency in it.

2. See with what a tender compassion he speaks of the desolations of this land. *Many pastors*, the Chaldean generals that made themselves masters of the country, and eat it up with their armies as easily as the Arabian shepherds with their flocks eat up the fruits of a piece of ground that lies common; *they have destroyed my vineyard*, without any consideration had either of the value of it, or my interest in it: they have with the greatest insolence and indignation *trodden it under foot*; and that which was a pleasant land they have made a *desolate wilderness*. The destruction was universal, *the whole land is made desolate*, *ver. 11*. it is made so by the sword of war; the *spoilers*, the Chaldean soldiers, are come *through the plain upon all high places*; they have made themselves masters of all the natural fastnesses and artificial fortresses, *ver. 12*. The sword devours from *one end of the land to the other*, all places lie exposed, and the numerous army of the invaders disperse themselves into every corner of that fruitful country, so that *no flesh shall have peace*, none shall be exempt from the calamity, nor be able to enjoy any tranquillity. *When all flesh have corrupted their way*, no flesh shall have peace; those only have peace that walk after the spirit.

3. See whence all this misery comes. (1.) It comes from the displeasure of God. It is the sword of the Lord that devours, *ver. 12*. While God's people keep close to him, the sword of their protectors and deliverers is the sword of the Lord, witness that of Gideon; but when they have forsaken him, so that he is become their enemy and fights against them; then the sword of their invaders and destroyers is become the sword of the Lord, witness this of the Chaldeans. It is *because of the fierce anger of the Lord*, *ver. 13*. that was it which kindled this fire among them, and made their enemies so furious. And who may stand before him when he is angry? (2.) It is their sin that has made God their enemy, particularly their incorrigibility under former rebukes, *ver. 11*. *The land mourns unto me*, the country that lies desolate doth, as it were, pour out its complaint before God, and humble itself under his hand, but the inhabitants are so senseless and stupid that none of them lay it to heart: they do not mourn to God, but are unaffected with his displeasure, while the very ground they go upon shames them. Note, When God's hand is lifted up, and men will not see, it shall be laid on, and they shall be made to feel, Isa. xvi. 11.

4. See how unable they should be to fence against it, *ver. 13*. *They have sown wheat*, they have taken a deal of pains for their own security, and promised themselves great matters from their endeavours, but it is all in vain, they shall reap thorns, *i. e.* that which shall prove very grievous and vexatious to them; instead of helping themselves, they shall but make themselves more uneasy; they have put themselves to pain, both with their labour, and with their expectation, but it shall not profit; they shall not prevail to extricate themselves out of the difficulties into which they have plunged themselves. *They shall be ashamed of your revenues*, that they have depended so much upon; their preparations for war, and particularly upon their ability to bear the charges of it. Money is the sinews of war; they thought they had enough of that, but shall be ashamed of it; for *their silver and gold shall not profit them* in the day of the Lord's anger.

14. ¶ Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them. 15. And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. 16. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The Lord liveth (as they taught my people to swear by Baal); then shall they be built in the midst of my people. 17. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD.

The prophet sometimes in God's name delivered messages both of judgment and mercy to the nations that bordered on the land of Israel: but here is a message to them all in general, who had in their turns been one way or other injurious to God's people, had either oppressed them, or triumphed in their being oppressed. Observe,

1. What the quarrel was that God had with them. They were his *evil neighbours*, *ver. 14. i. e.* evil neighbours to his church, and what they did against it he took as done against himself, and therefore called them *his evil neighbours*, that should have been *neighbourly* to Israel, but were quite otherwise. Note, It is often the lot of good people to live among bad neighbours, that are unkind and provoking to them; and it is bad indeed when they are all so. These *evil neighbours* were the Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, Edomites, Egyptians; they had been ill neighbours to Israel in helping to debauch them, and draw them from God: therefore God calls them his ill neighbours, and now they helped to make them desolate, and joined with the Chaldeans against them. It is just with God to make those the instruments of trouble to us, whom we have made instruments of sin. That which God lays to their charge is, they have *meddled with the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit*, they unjustly seized that which was none of their own: nay, they sacrilegiously turned that to their own use which was given to God's peculiar people. He that said, *Touch not mine anointed*; said also, *Touch not their inheritance*; it is at your peril if you do. Not only the persons, but the estates of God's people, are taken under his protection.

2. What course he would take with them. (1.) He would break the power they had got over his people, and force them to make restitution. I will *pluck up the house of Judah from among them*, which would be a great favour to God's people, who had either been taken captive by them, or when they fled to them for shelter, had been detained and made prisoners: but a great mortification to their enemies, who would be like a lion disappointed of his prey. The house of Judah either cannot or will not make any bold struggles towards their own liberty, but God will with a gracious violence pluck them out, will by his Spirit compel them to come out, and by his power compel their task-masters to let them go, as he plucked Israel out of Egypt. (2.) He would bring upon them the same calamities that they had been instrumental to bring upon his people: *I will pluck them out of their land*. Judgment began at the house of God, but it did not end there. Nebuchadnezzar, when he had wasted the land of Israel, turned his hand against their evil neighbours, and was a scourge to them.

3. What mercy God had in store for such of them as would join themselves to him and become his people, *ver. 15. 16*. They had drawn in God's backsliding people to join with them in the service of idols. If now they

they would be drawn by a returning people, to join with them in the service of the true and living God, they should not only have their enmity to the people of God forgiven them, but the distance which they had been kept at before should be removed, and they should be received to stand upon the same level with the Israel of God; which had its accomplishment in part, when after the return out of captivity, many of the people of the lands that had been ill neighbours to Israel, became Jews; and was to have its accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. Let not Israel, though injured by them, be implacable towards them, for God is not. *After that I have plucked them out, in justice for their sins, and in jealousy for the honour of Israel, I will return, will change my way, and have compassion on them.* Though being heathens they can lay no claim to the mercies of the covenant, yet they shall have benefit by the compassions of the Creator, who will look upon them as the work of his hands however. Note, God's controversies with his creatures, though they cannot be disputed, yet may be accommodated. Those who (as these here) have been not only strangers, but enemies in their minds by wicked works, may be reconciled, Col. i. 11. Observe here,

(1.) What were the terms on which God would shew favour to them: It is always provided, *that they will diligently learn the ways of my people.* That is in general; the ways that they walk in when they carry it as *my people*, not the crooked ways into which they have turned aside; the ways which my people are directed to take. Note, (1.) There are good ways that are peculiarly *the ways of God's people*, which, however they may differ in the choice of their paths, they are all agreed to walk in. The ways of holiness and heavenly-mindedness, of love and peaceableness; the ways of prayer and sabbath-sanctification, and diligent attendance on instituted ordinances, these and the like are *the ways of God's people*. (2.) Those that would have their lot with God's people, and their last end like their's, must learn their ways, and walk in them; must observe the rule they walk by, and conform to that rule, and the steps they take by that rule, and go forth by those footsteps. By an intimate conversation with God's people, they must learn to do as they do. (3.) It is impossible to learn the ways of God's people as they should be learned, without a great deal of care and pains: we must diligently observe these ways, and diligently oblige ourselves to walk in them; *look diligently*, Heb. xii. 15. and *work diligently*, Luke xiii. 25. In particular, they must learn to give honour to God's name, by making all their solemn appeals to him. They must learn to say, *The Lord liveth*, to own him, and to adore him, and to abide by his judgment: *as they taught my people to swear by Baal.* It was bad enough that they did themselves *swear by Baal*, worse that they taught others, and worst of all that they taught God's own people, who had been better taught; and yet if they will at length reform, they shall be accepted. Observe, (1.) We must not despair of the conversion of the worst; no not of those who have been instrumental to pervert and debauch others; even they may be brought to repentance, and if they be, shall find mercy. (2.) Those whom we have been industrious to draw to that which is evil, when God opens their eyes and our's, we should be as industrious to follow in that which is good. It will be a holy revenge upon ourselves to become pupils to those in the way of duty, to whom we have been tutors in the way of sin. (3.) The conversion of the deceived may prove a happy occasion of the conversion even of the deceivers. Thus they who fell together into the ditch, are sometimes plucked together out of it.

(2.) What should be the tokens and fruits of this favour, when they return to God, and God to them. (1.) They shall be restored to and re-established in their own land, *ver. 15. I will bring them again every man to his heritage.* The same hand that plucked them up shall plant them again. (2.) They shall become intitled to the spiritual privileges of God's Israel. If they will be towardly, and learn the ways of my people, will conform themselves to the rules, and confine themselves to the restraints of God's family, *then shall they be built in the midst of my people.* They shall not only be brought among them, to have a name and a place in the house of the Lord, where there was a court for the Gentiles, but they shall be built among them, they shall unite with them, the former enmities shall be slain. They shall be both edified and settled among them. See Isa. lvi. 5, 6, 7. Note, They that diligently learn the ways of God's people, shall enjoy the privileges and comforts of his people.

4. What should become of those that were still wedded to their own evil ways, yea though many of those about them turned to the Lord, *ver. 17. If they will not obey, if any of them continue to stand it out, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation*, that family, that particular person, *saith the Lord.* Those that will not be ruled by the grace of God, shall be ruined by the justice of God. And if disobedient nations shall be destroyed, much more disobedient churches, from whom better things are expected.

C H A P. XIII.

Still the prophet is attempting to awaken this fierce and stubborn people to repentance, by the consideration of the judgments of God that were coming upon them. He is to tell them, (1.) By the sign of a girdle spoiled, that their pride shall be stained, ver. 1—11. (2.) By the sign of bottles filled with wine, that their counsels should be blotted, ver. 12—14. (3.) In consideration hereof he is to call them to repent and humble themselves, ver. 15—21. (4.) He is to convince them that it is for their obstinacy and incorrigibility that the judgments of God are so prolonged, and brought to extremity, ver. 22—27.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins and put it not in water. 2. So I got a girdle according to the word of the LORD, and put it on my loins. 3. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, 4. Take the girdle that thou hast got; which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock. 5. So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me. 6. And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence which I commanded thee to hide there. 7. Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it; and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing. 8. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying. 9. Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the

pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. 10. This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing. 11. For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah; saith the LORD, that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

Here is, 1. A sign; the marring of a girdle, which the prophet had worn for some time by hiding it in a hole of a rock, near the river Euphrates. It was usual with the prophets to teach by signs, that a stupid, unthinking people might be brought to consider and believe, and be affected with what was thus set before them. (1.) He was to wear a linen girdle for some time, *ver. 1, 2.* Some think he wore it under his cloaths, because it was linen, and is said to *cleave to his loins*, *ver. 11.* It should rather seem to be worn upon his cloaths, for it was worn for a name and a praise, and probably was a fine fash, such as officers wear, and such as are commonly worn at this day in the eastern nations. He must not put it in water, but wear it as it was, that it might be the stronger, and less likely to rot: linen wastes almost as much with washing as with wearing. Being not wet, it was the more stiff, and less apt to ply, yet he must make a shift to wear it. Probably it was very fine linen, which will wear long without washing. The prophet, like John Baptist, was none of those that wore soft cloathing, and therefore it would be the more strange to see him with a linen girdle on, who probably used to wear a leathern one. (2.) After he had wore this linen girdle for some time, he must go and hide it in a hole of a rock (*ver. 4.*) by the water's side, where when the water was high, it would be wet, and when it fell would grow dry again, and by that means would soon rot, sooner than if it were always wet or always dry. (3.) After many days he must go look for it, and he should find it quite spoiled, gone all to rags and good for nothing, *ver. 7.* It has been of old a question among interpreters whether this was really done, so as to be seen and observed by the people; or only in a dream or vision, so as to go no farther than the prophet's own mind. It seems hard to imagine that the prophet should be sent on two such long journeys as to the river Euphrates, each of which would take him up some weeks time, when he could so ill be spared at home; and for that reason most incline to think the journey at least was only in vision, like that of Ezekiel, from the captivity in Chaldea to Jerusalem, *Ezek. viii. 3.* and from thence back to Chaldea, *chap. xi. 24.* And the explanation of this sign is only given to the prophet himself, *ver. 3.* not to the people, the sign being not public. But there being, it is probable, at that time great conveniences of travelling between Jerusalem and Babylon, and some part of Euphrates being not so far off, but that it was made the utmost border of the land of promise, *Josh. i. 4.* I see no inconvenience in supposing the prophet to have made two journeys thither; for it is expressly said, *he did as the Lord commanded him.* And thus gave a signal proof of his obsequiousness to his God, to shame the stubbornness of a disobedient people; and the toil of his journey would be very proper to signify both the pains they took to corrupt themselves with their idolatries, and the sad fatigue of their captivity; and Euphrates being the river of Babylon, which was to be the place of their bondage, was a material circumstance in this sign.

2. The thing signified by this sign. The prophet was willing to be at any costs and pains to afflict this people with the word of the Lord: ministers must spend and be spent for the good of souls. We have the reddition of this sign, *ver. 9, 10, 11.*

1. The people of Israel had been to God as this girdle, in two respects. (1.) He had taken them into covenant and communion with himself. *As the girdle cleaveth very close to the loins of man, and surrounds him, so have I caused to cleave to me the houses of Israel and Judah.* They were a people near to God, *Psal. cxliiii. 14.* They were his own, a peculiar people to him; a kingdom of priests, that had access to him above other nations. He caused them to cleave to him by the law he gave them, the prophets he sent among them, and the favours which in his providence he shewed them. He required their stated attendance in the courts of his house, and the frequent ratification of their covenant with him by sacrifices: thus they were made so to cleave to him, that one would think they could never have been parted. (2.) He had herein designed his own honour, when he took them to be to him for a people, it was that they might be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: as a girdle is an ornament to a man, and particularly the curious girdle of the ephod was to the high-priest for glory and for beauty. Note, Those whom God takes to be to him for a people, he intends to be to him for a praise. (1.) It is their duty to honour him, by observing his institutions, and aiming therein at his glory, and thus adorning their profession. (2.) It is their happiness that he reckons himself honoured in them and by them. He is pleased with them, and glories in his relation to them, while they behave themselves as becomes his people. He was pleased to take it among the titles of his honour to be the God of Israel, even a God to Israel, *1 Chron. xvii. 24.* In vain do we pretend to be to God for a people, if we be not to him for a praise.

2. They had by their idolatries and other iniquities loosed themselves from him, thrown themselves at a distance, robbed him of the honour they owed him, buried themselves in the earth, and foreign earth too, mingled themselves among the nations, and were so spoiled and corrupted that they were good for nothing: they could no more be to God, as they were designed, for a name and a praise, for they would not hear, neither their duty to do it, nor their privilege to value it; they refused to hear the words of God, by which they might have been kept still cleaving close to him; they walked in the imagination of their heart, wherever their fancy led them; and denied themselves no gratification they had a mind to, particularly in their worship; they would not cleave to God, but walked after other Gods to serve them, and to worship them: they doated upon the gods of the heathen nations that lay towards Euphrates, so that they were quite spoiled for the service of their own God, and were as this girdle, this rotten girdle, a disgrace to their profession, and not an ornament. And a thousand pities it was that such a girdle should be so spoiled, that such a people should so wretchedly degenerate.

3. God would by his judgments separate them from him, send them into captivity, deface all their beauty, and ruin their excellency, so that they should be like a fine girdle gone to rags, a worthless, useless, despicable people. God will after this manner mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. He would strip them of all that which was the matter of their pride, of which they boasted, and in which they trusted; it should not only be sullied and stained, but quite destroyed, like this linen girdle. Observe, He speaks of the pride of Judah; the country people were proud of

peace, when we come to the *swellings of Jordan*? (4.) In order to our preparation for farther and greater trials, we are concerned to approve ourselves well in present lesser trials, to keep up our spirits, keep hold of the promise, keep in our way, with our eye upon the prize, so run that we may obtain it.

Some good interpreters understand this as spoken to the people, who were very secure, and fearless of the threatened judgments: If they have been so humbled and impoverished by lesser calamities, wasted by the Assyrians; if the Ammonites and Moabites, that were their *brethren*, and with whom they were *in league*, if these proved false to them, as undoubtedly they would, then how would they be able to deal with such a powerful adversary as the Chaldeans would be? How would they bear up their head against that invasion, which should come like the *swellings of Jordan*?

7. ¶ I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies. 8. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it. 9. Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour. 10. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. 11. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart. 12. The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the *one* end of the land even to the *other* end of the land: no flesh shall have peace. 13. They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit; and they shall be ashamed of your revenues, because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

The people of the Jews are here marked for ruin. 1. God is here brought in *falling out with them*, and leaving them *desolate*; and they could never have been undone if they had not provoked God to desert them. It is a terrible word that God here saith, *ver. 7. I have forsaken my house*, the temple, which had been his palace; they had polluted it, and so forced him out of it. *I have left mine heritage*, and will look after it no more: his people that he hath taken such delight in and care of, are now thrown out of his protection. They had been the *dearly beloved of his soul*, precious in his sight, and honourable above any people; which is mentioned to aggravate their sin, in returning him hatred for his love; and their misery, in throwing themselves out of the favour of one that had such a kindness for them; and to justify God in his dealings with them: he sought not occasion against them, but if they would have carried themselves any thing tolerably, he would have made the best of them, for they were the *beloved of his soul*; but they had carried themselves so that they had provoked him to give them *into the hand of their enemies*, to leave them unguarded, an easy prey to those that bore them ill will. But what was the quarrel God had with a people that had been so long dear to him? why, truly they were degenerated. (1.) They were become like *beasts of prey*, which nobody loves, but every body avoids and gets as far off from as they can, *ver. 8. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest*. Their sins cry to heaven for vengeance as loud as a lion roars. Nay, they cry out against God, in the threatenings and slaughter which they breathe against his prophets that speak to them in his name; and what is said and done against them, God takes as said and done against himself. They blaspheme his name, oppose his authority, and bid defiance to his justice; and so cry out against him as a lion in the forest. They that were the *sheep of God's pasture*, are become barbarous and ravenous, and as ungovernable as lions in the forests, therefore I hated them; for what delight could the God of love take in a people that were now become as *roaring lions and raging beasts*, fit to be taken and shot at, as a vexation and torment to all about them? (2.) They were become like *birds of prey*, and therefore also unworthy a place in God's house, where neither beasts nor birds of prey were admitted to be offered in sacrifice, *ver. 9. Mine heritage is unto me as a bird with talons*, so some read it, and so the margin; they are continually pulling and pecking at one another, they have by their unnatural contentions made their country a cock-pit. Or, as a *speckled bird*, dyed, or sprinkled, or bedewed, with the blood of her prey; the shedding of innocent blood was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, and hastened their ruin; not only as it provoked God against them, but as it provoked their neighbours likewise; for those that have their hand against every man, shall have every man's hand against them, Gen. xvi. 12. and so it follows here, the *birds round about are against her*: Some make her a *speckled*, pied, or *motley bird*, upon account of their mixing the superstitious customs and usages of the heathen with divine institutions in the worship of God: they were fond of a *party-coloured religion*, and thought it made them fine when really it made them odious. God's turtle-dove is no *speckled bird*.

2. The enemies are here brought in *falling upon them*, and laying them *desolate*. And some think it is upon this account that they are compared to a *speckled bird*, because the fowls use to make a noise about a bird of an odd unusual colour: God's people are among the children of this world as *men wondered at*, as a *speckled bird*; but this people had by their own folly made themselves so; and the *beasts and birds* are called and commissioned to prey upon them. Let all the birds round be against her, for God has forsaken her, and with them let all the beasts of the field come to devour. Those that have made a prey of others, shall themselves be preyed upon. It did not lessen the sin of the nations, but very much *greatened* the misery of Judah and Jerusalem, that the desolation brought upon them was by order from heaven. The *birds and beasts* are perhaps called to feast upon the bodies of the slain, as in St. John's vision, *Rev. xix. 17*.

The utter desolation of the land by the Chaldean army is here spoken of as a thing done, so sure, so near was it. God speaks of it as a thing which he had appointed to be done, and yet which he had no pleasure in, no more than in the death of other sinners.

1. See with what a tender affection he speaks of this land, notwithstanding the sinfulness of it, in remembrance of his covenant, and the tribute of honour and glory he had formerly had from it. It is *my vineyard, my portion, my pleasant portion*, *ver. 10*. Note, God has a kindness and concern for his church, though there be much amiss in it: and his correcting of it will very much consist with his complacency in it.

2. See with what a tender compassion he speaks of the desolations of this land. *Many pastors*, the Chaldean generals that made themselves masters of the country, and eat it up with their armies as easily as the Arabian shepherds with their flocks eat up the fruits of a piece of ground that lies common; they have destroyed my vineyard, without any consideration had either of the value of it, or my interest in it: they have with the greatest insolence and indignation trodden it under foot; and that which was a pleasant land they have made a *desolate wilderness*. The destruction was universal, the whole land is made desolate, *ver. 11*. it is made so by the sword of war; the *spoilers*, the Chaldean soldiers, are come through the plain upon all high places; they have made themselves masters of all the natural fastnesses and artificial fortresses, *ver. 12*. The sword devours from one end of the land to the other, all places lie exposed, and the numerous army of the invaders disperse themselves into every corner of that fruitful country, so that no flesh shall have peace, none shall be exempt from the calamity, nor be able to enjoy any tranquillity. When all flesh have corrupted their way, no flesh shall have peace; those only have peace that walk after the spirit.

3. See whence all this misery comes. (1.) It comes from the displeasure of God. It is the sword of the Lord that devours, *ver. 12*. While God's people keep close to him, the sword of their protectors and deliverers is the sword of the Lord, witness that of Gideon: but when they have forsaken him, so that he is become their enemy and fights against them; then the sword of their invaders and destroyers is become the sword of the Lord, witness this of the Chaldeans. It is because of the fierce anger of the Lord, *ver. 13*. that was it which kindled this fire among them, and made their enemies so furious. And who may stand before him when he is angry? (2.) It is their sin that has made God their enemy, particularly their incorrigibility under former rebukes, *ver. 11*. The land mourns unto me, the country that lies desolate doth, as it were, pour out its complaint before God, and humble itself under his hand, but the inhabitants are so senseless and stupid that none of them lay it to heart: they do not mourn to God, but are unaffected with his displeasure, while the very ground they go upon shames them. Note, When God's hand is lifted up, and men will not see, it shall be laid on, and they shall be made to feel, *Isa. xxvi. 11*.

4. See how unable they should be to fence against it, *ver. 13*. They have sown wheat, they have taken a deal of pains for their own security, and promised themselves great matters from their endeavours, but it is all in vain, they shall reap thorns, *i. e.* that which shall prove very grievous and vexatious to them; instead of helping themselves, they shall but make themselves more uneasy; they have put themselves to pain, both with their labour, and with their expectation, but it shall not profit; they shall not prevail to extricate themselves out of the difficulties into which they have plunged themselves. They shall be ashamed of your revenues, that they have depended so much upon; their preparations for war, and particularly upon their ability to bear the charges of it. Money is the sinews of war; they thought they had enough of that, but shall be ashamed of it; for their silver and gold shall not profit them in the day of the Lord's anger.

14. ¶ Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them. 15. And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. 16. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The Lord liveth (as they taught my people to swear by Baal); then shall they be built in the midst of my people. 17. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD.

The prophet sometimes in God's name delivered messages both of judgment and mercy to the nations that bordered on the land of Israel: but here is a message to them all in general, who had in their turns been one way or other injurious to God's people, had either oppressed them, or triumphed in their being oppressed. Observe,

1. What the quarrel was that God had with them. They were his evil neighbours, *ver. 14. i. e.* evil neighbours to his church, and what they did against it he took as done against himself, and therefore called them his evil neighbours, that should have been neighbourly to Israel, but were quite otherwise. Note, It is often the lot of good people to live among bad neighbours, that are unkind and provoking to them; and it is bad indeed when they are all so. These evil neighbours were the Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, Edomites, Egyptians; they had been ill neighbours to Israel in helping to debauch them, and draw them from God: therefore God calls them his ill neighbours, and now they helped to make them desolate, and joined with the Chaldeans against them. It is just with God to make those the instruments of trouble to us, whom we have made instruments of sin. That which God lays to their charge is, they have meddled with the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit, they unjustly seized that which was none of their own: nay, they sacrilegiously turned that to their own use which was given to God's peculiar people. He that said, Touch not mine anointed: said also, Touch not their inheritance; it is at your peril if you do. Not only the persons, but the estates of God's people, are taken under his protection.

2. What course he would take with them. (1.) He would break the power they had got over his people, and force them to make restitution. I will pluck up the house of Judah from among them, which would be a great favour to God's people, who had either been taken captive by them, or when they fled to them for shelter, had been detained and made prisoners: but a great mortification to their enemies, who would be like a lion disappointed of his prey. The house of Judah either cannot or will not make any bold struggles towards their own liberty, but God will with a gracious violence pluck them out, will by his Spirit compel them to come out, and by his power compel their task-masters to let them go, as he plucked Israel out of Egypt. (2.) He would bring upon them the same calamities that they had been instrumental to bring upon his people: I will pluck them out of their land. Judgment began at the house of God, but it did not end there. Nebuchadnezzar, when he had wasted the land of Israel, turned his hand against their evil neighbours, and was a scourge to them.

3. What mercy God had in store for such of them as would join themselves to him and become his people, *ver. 15. 16*. They had drawn in God's backsliding people to join with them in the service of idols. If now they

they would be drawn by a returning people, to join with them in the service of the true and living God, they should not only have their enmity to the people of God forgiven them, but the distance which they had been kept at before should be removed, and they should be received to stand upon the same level with the Israel of God; which had its accomplishment in part, when after the return out of captivity, many of the people of the lands that had been ill neighbours to Israel, became Jews; and was to have its accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. Let not Israel, though injured by them, be implicable towards them, for God is not. *After that I have plucked them out, in justice for their sins, and in jealousy for the honour of Israel, I will return, will change my way, and have compassion on them.* Though being heathens they can lay no claim to the mercies of the covenant, yet they shall have benefit by the compassions of the Creator, who will look upon them as the work of his hands however. Note, God's controversies with his creatures, though they cannot be disputed, yet may be accommodated. Those who (as these here) have been not only strangers, but *enemies in their minds by wicked works*, may be reconciled, Col. i. 11. Observe here,

(1.) What were the terms on which God would shew favour to them: It is always provided, *that they will diligently learn the ways of my people.* That is in general; the ways that they walk in when they carry it as *my people*, not the crooked ways into which they have turned aside; the ways which my people are directed to take. Note, (1.) There are good ways that are peculiarly *the ways of God's people*, which, however they may differ in the choice of their paths, they are all agreed to walk in. The ways of holiness and heavenly-mindedness, of love and peaceableness; the ways of prayer and sabbath-sanctification, and diligent attendance on instituted ordinances, these and the like are *the ways of God's people.* (2.) Those that would have their lot with God's people, and their last end like their's, must *learn their ways*, and walk in them; must observe the rule they walk by, and conform to that rule, and the steps they take by that rule, and go forth by those footsteps. By an intimate conversation with God's people, they must learn to do as they do. (3.) It is impossible to learn the ways of God's people as they should be learned, without a great deal of care and pains: we must diligently observe these ways, and diligently oblige ourselves to walk in them; *look diligently*, Heb. xii. 15. and *work diligently*, Luke xiii. 25. In particular, they must learn to give honour to God's name, by making all their solemn appeals to him. They must learn to say, *The Lord liveth*, to own him, and to adore him, and to abide by his judgment: *as they taught my people to swear by Baal.* It was bad enough that they did themselves swear by Baal, worse that they taught others, and worst of all that they taught God's own people, who had been better taught: and yet if they will at length reform, they shall be accepted. Observe, (1.) We must not despair of the conversion of the worst; no not of those who have been instrumental to pervert and debauch others; even they may be brought to repentance, and if they be, shall find mercy. (2.) Those whom we have been industrious to draw to that which is evil, when God opens their eyes and our's, we should be as industrious to follow in that which is good. It will be a holy revenge upon ourselves to become pupils to those in the way of duty, to whom we have been tutors in the way of sin. (3.) The conversion of the deceived may prove a happy occasion of the conversion even of the deceivers. Thus they who fell together into the ditch, are sometimes plucked together out of it.

(2.) What should be the tokens and fruits of this favour, when they return to God, and God to them. (1.) They shall be restored to and re-established in their own land, ver. 15. *I will bring them again every man to his heritage.* The same hand that plucked them up shall plant them again. (2.) They shall become intitled to the spiritual privileges of God's Israel. If they will be towardly, and *learn the ways of my people*, will conform themselves to the rules, and confine themselves to the restraints of God's family, *then shall they be built in the midst of my people.* They shall not only be brought among them, to have a name and a place in the house of the Lord, where there was a court for the Gentiles, but they shall be built among them, they shall unite with them, the former enmities shall be slain. They shall be both edified and settled among them. See Isa. lvi. 5, 6, 7. Note, They that diligently learn the ways of God's people, shall enjoy the privileges and comforts of his people.

4. What should become of those that were still wedded to their own evil ways, yea though many of those about them turned to the Lord, ver. 17. *If they will not obey, if any of them continue to stand it out, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, that family, that particular person, saith the Lord.* Those that will not be ruled by the grace of God, shall be ruined by the justice of God. And if disobedient nations shall be destroyed, much more disobedient churches, from whom better things are expected.

C H A P. XIII.

Still the prophet is attempting to awaken this secure and stubborn people to repentance, by the consideration of the judgments of God that were coming upon them. He is to tell them, (1.) *By the sign of a girdle spoiled, that their pride shall be stained*, ver. 1—11. (2.) *By the sign of bottles filled with wine, that their counsels should be blasted*, ver. 12—14. (3.) *In consideration hereof he is to call them to repent and humble themselves*, ver. 15—21. (4.) *He is to convince them that it is for their obstinacy and incorrigibility that the judgments of God are so prolonged, and brought to extremity*, ver. 22—27.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins and put it not in water. 2. So I got a girdle according to the word of the LORD, and put it on my loins. 3. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, 4. Take the girdle that thou hast got; which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock. 5. So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me. 6. And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence which I commanded thee to hide there. 7. Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it; and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing. 8. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying. 9. Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the

pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. 10. This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing. 11. For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah; saith the LORD, that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

Here is, 1. A sign; the marring of a girdle, which the prophet had worn for some time by hiding it in a hole of a rock, near the river Euphrates. It was usual with the prophets to teach by signs, that a stupid, unthinking people might be brought to consider and believe, and be affected with what was thus set before them. (1.) He was to wear a linen girdle for some time, ver. 1, 2. Some think he wore it under his cloaths, because it was linen, and is said to *cleave to his loins*, ver. 11. It should rather seem to be worn upon his cloaths, for it was worn for a name and a praise, and probably was a fine fash, such as officers wear, and such as are commonly worn at this day in the eastern nations. He must not *put it in water*, but wear it as it was, that it might be the stronger, and less likely to rot: linen wastes almost as much with washing as with wearing. Being not wet, it was the more stiff, and less apt to ply, yet he must make a shift to wear it. Probably it was very fine linen, which will wear long without washing. The prophet, like John Baptist, was none of those that wore soft cloathing, and therefore it would be the more strange to see him with a linen girdle on, who probably used to wear a leathern one. (2.) After he had wore this linen girdle for some time, he must go and *hide it in a hole of a rock* (ver. 4.) by the water's side, where when the water was high, it would be wet, and when it fell would grow dry again, and by that means would soon rot, sooner than if it were always wet or always dry. (3.) After many days he must go look for it, and he should find it quite spoiled, gone all to rags and good for nothing, ver. 7. It has been of old a question among interpreters whether this was really done, so as to be seen and observed by the people; or only in a dream or vision, so as to go no further than the prophet's own mind. It seems hard to imagine that the prophet should be sent on two such long journeys as to the river Euphrates, each of which would take him up some weeks time, when he could so ill be spared at home; and for that reason most incline to think the journey at least was only in vision, like that of Ezekiel, from the captivity in Chaldean to Jerusalem, Ezek. viii. 3. and from thence back to Chaldean, chap. xi. 24. And the explanation of this sign is only given to the prophet himself, ver. 3. not to the people, the sign being not public. But there being, it is probable, at that time great conveniences of travelling between Jerusalem and Babylon, and some part of Euphrates being not so far off, but that it was made the utmost border of the land of promise, Josh. i. 4. I see no inconvenience in supposing the prophet to have made two journeys thither; for it is expressly said, *he did as the Lord commanded him.* And thus gave a signal proof of his obsequiousness to his God, to shame the stubbornness of a disobedient people; and the toil of his journey would be very proper to signify both the pains they took to corrupt themselves with their idolatries, and the sad fatigue of their captivity: and Euphrates being the river of Babylon, which was to be the place of their bondage, was a material circumstance in this sign.

2. The thing signified by this sign. The prophet was willing to be at any costs and pains to affect this people with the word of the Lord: ministers must spend and be spent for the good of souls. We have the reddition of this sign, ver. 9, 10, 11.

1. The people of Israel had been to God as this girdle, in two respects. (1.) He had taken them into covenant and communion with himself. *As the girdle cleaveth very close to the loins of man, and surrounds him, so have I caused to cleave to me the houses of Israel and Judah.* They were a people near to God, Psal. cxlviii. 14. they were his own, a peculiar people to him; a kingdom of priests, that had access to him above other nations. He caused them to cleave to him by the law he gave them, the prophets he sent among them, and the favours which in his providence he shewed them. He required their stated attendance in the courts of his house, and the frequent ratification of their covenant with him by sacrifices; thus they were made so to cleave to him, that one would think they could never have been parted. (2.) He had herein designed his own honour, when he took them to be to him for a people, it was that they might be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory; as a girdle is an ornament to a man, and particularly the curious girdle of the ephod was to the high-priest for glory and for beauty. Note, Those whom God takes to be to him for a people, he intends to be to him for a praise. (1.) It is their duty to honour him, by observing his institutions, and aiming therein at his glory, and thus adorning their profession. (2.) It is their happiness that he reckons himself honoured in them and by them. He is pleased with them, and glories in his relation to them, while they behave themselves as becomes his people. He was pleased to take it among the titles of his honour to be *the God of Israel*, even a God to Israel, 1 Chron. xvii. 24. In vain do we pretend to be to God for a people, if we be not to him for a praise.

2. They had by their idolatries and other iniquities loosed themselves from him, thrown themselves at a distance, robbed him of the honour they owed him, buried themselves in the earth, and foreign earth too, mingled themselves among the nations, and were so spoiled and corrupted that they were good for nothing: they could no more be to God, as they were designed, for a name and a praise, for they would not hear, neither their duty to do it, nor their privilege to value it; they refused to hear the words of God, by which they might have been kept still cleaving close to him; they walked in the imagination of their heart, wherever their fancy led them; and denied themselves no gratification they had a mind to, particularly in their worship; they would not cleave to God, but walked after other Gods to serve them, and to worship them: they doated upon the gods of the heathen nations that lay towards Euphrates, so that they were quite spoiled for the service of their own God, and were as this girdle, this rotten girdle, a disgrace to their profession, and not an ornament. And a thousand pities it was that such a girdle should be so spoiled, that such a people should so wretchedly degenerate.

3. God would by his judgments separate them from him, send them into captivity, deface all their beauty, and ruin their excellency, so that they should be like a fine girdle gone to rags, a worthless, useless, despicable people. God will after this manner mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. He would strip them of all that which was the matter of their pride, of which they boasted, and in which they trusted; it should not only be sullied and stained, but quite destroyed, like this linen girdle. Observe, He speaks of the pride of Judah; the country people were proud of

of their holy land, their good land, but it is the *great pride of Jerusalem*; there the temple was, and the royal palace, and therefore those citizens were more proud than the inhabitants of other cities. God takes notice of the degrees of men's pride; the pride of some, and the great pride of others, and he will mar it, he will stain it. Pride will have a fall, for God resists the proud. He will either *mar the pride* that is in us, that is, *mortify* it by his grace, make us ashamed of it, and, like Hezekiah, humble us for the pride of our hearts, the great pride, and cure us of it, as great as it is; and this marring of the pride will be the making of the soul; happy it is for us, if by humbling providences our hearts be humbled: or else, he will mar the thing we are proud of. Parts, gifts, learning, power, external privileges, if we are proud of these, it is just with God to blast them; even the temple, when it became Jerusalem's pride, was marred and laid in ashes. It is the honour of God to *look upon every one that is proud, and abase him*.

12. ¶ Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word; Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine: and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know, that every bottle shall be filled with wine? 13. Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Behold I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness. 14. And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them. 15. ¶ Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken. 16. Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. 17. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears because the LORD's flock is carried away captive. 18. Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down; for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory. 19. The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them: Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive. 20. Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north: where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock? 21. What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? (for thou hast taught them to be captains, and as chief over thee) shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travail?

Here is, 1. A judgment threatened against this people, that would quite intoxicate them. This doom is pronounced against them in a figure, to make it the more taken notice of, and the more affecting, *ver. 12. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine*, i. e. those who by their sins have made themselves *vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*, shall be filled with the wrath of God, as a bottle is with wine; and as every vessel of mercy prepared for glory shall be filled with mercy and glory, so they shall be *full of the fury of the Lord*, Isa. li. 29. and they shall be brittle as bottles; and as *old bottles* into which *new wine* is put, they shall burst and be broken to pieces, *Matt. ix. 17.* or, they shall have their heads as full of wine as bottles are, for so it is explained, *ver. 13. They shall be filled with drunkenness*; compare *Isa. li. 17.* It is likely this was a common proverb among them, applied divers ways; but they not being aware of the prophet's meaning in it, ridiculed him for it, *Do we not certainly know, that every bottle shall be filled with wine?* What strange thing is there in that? Tell us something that we did not know before. Perhaps they were thus touchy with the prophet, because they apprehended this to be a reflection upon them for their drunkenness, and probably it was in a part so intended; *They love stagons of wine*, *Hos. iii. 1.* They made their king *sick with bottles of wine*, *Hos. vii. 3.* Their watchmen were all *for wine*, *Isa. lvi. 12.* They love their false prophets that prophesied to them of wine, *Micah ii. 11.* That bid them be merry, for they should never want their bottle to make them so. Well, saith the prophet, you shall have your bottles full of wine, but not such wine as you desire. They suspected he had some mystical meaning in it, which prophesied no good concerning them, but evil; and he owns that so he had. What he meant was this,

(1.) That they should be as giddy as men in drink. And a drunken man is fitly compared to a bottle or cask full of wine; for when the wine is in, the wit, and wisdom, and virtue, and all that is good for any thing is out. Now God threatens, *ver. 13.* that they shall all be *filled with drunkenness*; they shall be full of confusion in their counsels, shall *fall* in all their talk; and *slagger* in all their motions; they shall not know what they say or do, much less what they should say or do. They shall be sick of all their enjoyments, and throw them up as drunken men do, *Job xx. 15.* They shall fall into a slumber, and be utterly unable to help themselves, and like men that have drunk away their reason shall lie at the mercy, and expose themselves to the contempt of all about them. And this shall be the condition not of some among them. If any had been sober, they might have helped the rest; but even the kings that sit upon the throne of David, that should have been like their father David, who was *wise as an angel of God*, shall be thus intoxicated. Their priests and prophets too, their false prophets, that pretend to guide them, were as indulgent of their lusts, and therefore were justly as much deprived of their senses as any other. Nay, and all the inhabitants, both of the land and of Jerusalem, were as far gone as they. Whom God will destroy he insatuates.

(2.) That being giddy they should run a-head upon one another. The cup of the wine of the Lord's fury shall throw them not only into a lethargy, so that they shall not be able to help themselves or one another, but into a perfect frenzy, so that they shall do mischief to themselves and one another. *Jer. 14. I will dash a man against his brother.* Not only their drunken follies, but their drunken frays shall help to ruin them. Drunken men are often quarrellous, and upon that account they have *woe and sorrow*, *Prov. xxiii.*

29, 30. So their sin is their punishment; it was for here. God sent an *evil spirit* into families and neighbourhoods, as *Judges ix. 23.* which made them *jealous* of, and *spiteful* towards one another: So that the fathers and sons went together by the ears, and were ready to pull one another to pieces, which made them all an easy prey to the common enemy. This decree against them being gone forth, God saith, *I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them*: for they will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy one another, see *Hab. ii. 15, 16.*

2. Here is good counsel given, which if it were taken, this desolation would be prevented. It is in short, to *humble themselves under the mighty hand of God*. If they will *hearken and give ear*, this is that which God has to say to them, *Be not proud*, *ver. 15.* This was one of the sins for which God had a controversy with them, *ver. 9.* Let them mortify and forsake this sin, and God will let fall his controversy. *Be not proud*, i. e. when God speaks to you by his prophets, do not think yourselves too good to be taught; be not scornful, be not wilful: Let not your hearts rise against the word, nor slight the messengers that bring it you, when God is coming forth against you in his providence, and by them he speaks: Be not secure when he threatens, be not impatient when he strikes, for pride is at the bottom of both. It is the great God that has *spoken*, whose authority is incontestible, whose power is irresistible, therefore bow to what he saith, and *be not proud*.

They must not be proud, for,

(1.) They must *advance* God, and study how to do him honour: *Give glory to the Lord your God*, and not to your idols, not to other gods. Give him glory, by confessing your sins, owning yourselves guilty before him, and accepting the punishment of your iniquity, *ver. 16.* Give him glory by a sincere repentance and reformation. Then, and not till then, we begin to live as we should, and to some good purpose, when we begin to *give glory to the Lord our God*; to make his honour our chief end, and to seek it accordingly. Do this quickly while your space to repent is continued to you; *before he cause darkness*, before he bring his judgments upon you, which you will see no way of escaping. Note, Darkness will be the portion of those that will not repeat to *give glory to God*. When those that by the fourth vial were scorched with heat *repented not to give glory to God*, the next vial filled them with darkness, *Rev. xvi. 9, 10.* The aggravation of the darkness here threatened, is, (1.) That their attempts to escape shall hasten their ruin; *their feet shall stumble* when they are making all haste they can over the dark mountains, and they shall fall, and be unable to get up again. Note, Those that think to out-run the judgments of God, will find their road impassible; let them *make the best* of their way, they can *make nothing* of it, the judgments that pursue them will overtake them; their way is dark and slippery, *Psal. xxxv. 6.* And therefore before it comes to that extremity it is our wisdom to *give glory* to him, and so make our peace with him; to fly to his mercy, and then there will be no occasion to fly from his justice. (2.) That their hopes of a better state of things will be disappointed; *while ye look for light*, for comfort and relief, he will *turn it into the shadow of death*, which is very dismal and terrible, and make it *gross darkness*, like that of Egypt, when Pharaoh continued to harden his heart, which was darkness that might be felt. The expectation of impatient sinners perisheth, *when they die*, and think to have it satisfied.

(2.) They must *abate* themselves, and take shame to themselves; the prerogative of the king and queen will not exempt them from this, *ver. 19.* Say to the king and queen, that as great as they are they must *humble themselves* by true repentance, and so give both glory to God and a good example to their subjects. Note, Those that are exalted above others in the world, must humble themselves before God, who is higher than the highest, and to whom kings and queens are accountable. They must *humble themselves*, and *sit down*: sit down, and consider what is coming; sit down in the dust, and lament themselves. Let them *humble themselves*, for God will otherwise take an effectual course to humble them. Your principalities shall come down, the honour and power by which you value yourselves, and in which you confide, *even the crown of your glory*, your goodly or glorious crown; when you are led away captives, where will your principality and all the badges of it be then? Blessed be God, there is a crown of glory, which those shall inherit who do humble themselves, that shall never come down.

3. This counsel is enforced by some arguments; if they continue proud and unhumbed,

1. It will be to the prophet's *unspeakable grief*, *ver. 17.* If you will not hear it, will not submit to the word, but continue refractory, not only mine eye, but my soul shall weep in secret places. Note, Obstinacy of people in refusing to hear the word of God, will be a heart-breaking to their poor ministers, who knew something of the terrors of the Lord and the wrath of souls, and are so far from desiring, that they tremble at the thoughts of the death of sinners. His grief, for it was undiminished, his soul wept: he was full of affliction, for he chose to weep in secret places, where no eye saw him but him who is all eye. He would not only mingle his tears with his public preaching, but with his private devotions: Nay, thoughts of their case would make him melancholy, and he will become a perfect recluse. It would grieve him, (1.) To see their sins unrepented of, *my soul shall weep for your pride*, your haughtiness, and stubbornness, and vain confidence. Note, The sins of others should be matter of sorrow to us: We must mourn for that which we cannot mend; and mourn the more for it, because we cannot mend it. (2.) To see their calamity past redress and remedy; *mine eyes shall weep sore*, not so much because my relations, friends, and neighbours, are in distress, but *because the Lord's flock*, his people, and the sheep of his pasture, are *carried away captive*. That should always grieve us most, by which God's honour suffers, and the interest of his kingdom is weakened.

2. It will be to their own inevitable ruin, *ver. 19, 20, 21.*

1. The land shall be laid waste: the cities of the south shall be shut up: The cities of Judah lay in the southern parts of the land of Canaan, these shall be straitly besieged by the enemy, so that there shall be no going in or out; or deserted by the inhabitants, that there shall be none to go in and out. Some understand it of the cities of Egypt, which were south from Judah; the places there, whence they expected succours, shall fail, them, and they shall find no access to them.

2. The inhabitants shall be hurried away into a foreign country, there to live in slavery: *Judah shall be carried away captive*. Some were already carried off, which they hoped might serve to answer the prediction, and that the residue should still be left; no, *it shall be carried away all of it*: God will make a full end with them, *it shall be wholly carried away*: So it was in the last captivity under Zedekiah, because they repented not.

3. The enemy was now at hand that should do this, *ver. 20. Lift up your eyes*; I see them upon their march, and you may if you will: *behold them that come from the north*, from the land of the Chaldeans: see how fast they advance, how fierce they appear. Upon this he addresseth himself to the king, or rather (because the pronouns are feminine) to the city or state. (1.) What will you do now with the people which is committed to your charge, and which you ought to protect? *Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?* Whither canst thou take them now for shelter?

How

How can they escape their perishing waters? Magistrates must look upon themselves as shepherds, and not as lords, that are under their charge as *their flock*; which they are intrusted with the care of, and must give an account of; they must take delight in them as the *beautiful flock*, and consider what to do for their safety in times of public danger. Masters of families, that neglect their children, and suffer them to perish for want of a good education, and ministers that neglect their people, should think they hear God putting this question to them, *If here is the flock that was given thee to feed, that beautiful flock?* It is starved, it is left exposed to the beasts of prey. What account will you give of them when the chief shepherd shall appear? (2.) What have you to object against the equity of God's proceedings? *What wilt thou say when he shall visit upon thee the former days?* Thou canst say nothing, but that *God is just in all that is brought upon thee*. They that flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, what will they say? What a confusion will cover their faces, when they shall find themselves deceived, and that God doth *punish* them! (3.) What thoughts will they now have of their own folly, in giving the Chaldeans such power over them; by seeking to them for assistance, and joining in league with them? *Thus thou hast taught them against thyself to be captains, and to become the head*. Hezekiah began, when he shewed his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, tempting him thereby to come and plunder him. Those that having a God to trust to, court foreign alliances and confide in them, do but make rods for themselves, and *teach* their neighbours how to become their masters. (4.) How will they bear the trouble that is at the door? *Shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travail?* Sorrows which thou canst not escape or put off, extremity of sorrows; and in these respects more grievous than those of a woman in travail, that they were not *expected before*, and that there is no *man-child* to be born, the *joy* of which shall make them *afterwards* to be *forgotten*.

22. And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. 24. Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness. 25. This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood. 26. Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear. 27. I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abomination on the hills in the fields. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt not thou be made clean? when shall it once be?

Here is, 1. Ruin threatened as before, that the Jews shall go into captivity, and fall under all the miseries of beggary and bondage; shall be stripped of their cloaths; *their skirts discovered*, for want of upper garments to cover them, and *their heels made bare*, for want of shoes, *ver. 22*. Thus they used to deal with prisoners taken in war, when they drove them into captivity, *naked and bare-foot*, Isa. xx. 4. Being thus carried off into a strange country, they shall be *scattered* there, as the stubble that is blown away by the wind of the wilderness, and nobody is concerned to bring it together again, *ver. 24*. If the stubble escape the fire, it shall be carried away by the wind. If one judgment do not the work, another shall, with those that by sin have made themselves as *stubble*. They shall be stripped of all their ornaments, and exposed to shame, as whores that are carted, *ver. 26*. They made their pride appear, but God will *make their shame appear*; so that those who have boasted on them, shall be ashamed of them.

1. An enquiry made by the people into the cause of this ruin, *ver. 22*. Thou wilt say in thine heart (and God knows how to give a proper answer to what men say in their hearts, though they do not speak it out; *Jesus knowing their thoughts*, replied to them, Matt. ix. 4.) *Wherefore come these things upon me?* The question is supposed to come into the heart, (1.) Of a sinner quarrelling with God, and refusing to receive correction; they could not see that they had done any thing which might justly provoke God to be thus angry with them; They durst not speak it out; but in their hearts they thus charged God with unrighteousness, as if he had *laid upon them more than was meet*. They seek for the cause of their calamities, when if they had not been wilfully blind, they might easily have seen it. Or, (2.) Of a sinner returning to God. If there come but a penitent thought into the heart at any time, saying, *What have I done?* chap. viii. 6. Wherefore am I in affliction? Why doth God contend with me? God takes notice of it, and is ready by his Spirit to impress the conviction, that sin being discovered, it may be repented of.

3. An answer to this enquiry. God will be justified when he speaks, and will oblige us to justify him; and therefore will set the sin of sinners in order before them. Do they ask, *Wherefore these things come upon them?* Let them know, it is all along of themselves.

1. It is for the *greatness of their iniquities*, *ver. 22*. God doth not take advantage against them for small faults; no, the sins for which he now punisheth them are of the first rate, very heinous in their own nature, and highly aggravated: For the *multitude of thine iniquity*, so it may be read, Sins of every kind, and often repented and relapsed into. And some think we are more in danger from the multitude of our lesser sins, than from the heinousness of our greater sins: of both we may say, *Who can understand his errors?*

2. It is for their *obstinacy in sin*; their being so long accustomed to it, that there is little hopes left of their being reclaimed from it, *ver. 23*. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin*, that is by nature black, or the leopard his spots, that are even woven into the skin? Dirt contracted may be washed off, but we cannot alter the natural colour of a hair, Matt. v. 36. much less of the skin; and so impossible is it, morally impossible, to reclaim and reform these people. (1.) They had been long *accustomed to do evil*; they were taught to do evil, they had been educated and brought up in sin, they had served an apprenticeship to it, and had all their days made a trade of it. It was so much their *constant practice*, that it was become *second nature* to them. (2.) Their prophets therefore despaired of ever bringing them to *do good*. That was it they aimed at; they persuaded them to cease to do evil and learn to do well, but could not prevail. They had so long been used to do evil, that it was next to impossible for them to repent and amend, and begin to do good. Note, Custom in sin is a very great hindrance to conversion from sin. The disease that is inveterate, is generally thought incurable. Those that have been long *accustomed to sin*, have shaken off the restraints of fear and shame; their consciences are seared, the habits of sin

are confirmed, it pleads prescription, and it is left with God to give grace up to their own hearts. Lusts, that have long reigned to give up to themselves to his grace. Sin is the *blackness* of the soul, the deformity of its beauty, the discolouring of it; it is natural to us, we were *propen* to it, so that we cannot get clear of it by any power of our own; but there is an almighty grace that is able to change the *Ethiopian's skin*, and that grace shall not be wanting to those, that in a sense of their need of it seek it earnestly, and improve it faithfully.

3. It is for their treacherous *departures* from the God of truth, and *dependences* on lying vanities, *ver. 25*. *This is thy lot*, to be scattered and driven away; this is *the portion of thy measures from me*; the punishment assigned thee as by line and measure; this shall be thy share of the miseries of this world; expect it, and think not to escape it: It is *because thou hast forgotten me*, the favours I have bestowed upon thee, and the obligations thou art under to me; thou hast no sense, no remembrance of these. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all sin, as the remembrance of our Creator betimes is the happy and hopeful beginning of a holy life. And having *forgotten me*, thou hast *trusted in falsehood*, in idols, in an arm of flesh, in Egypt and Assyria, in the false flatteries of a deceitful heart. Whatever those trust to that forsake God, they will find it a *broken reed*, a *broken cistern*.

4. It is for their idolatry, their spiritual whoredom, that sin which is of all other most provoking to the *jealous God*. Therefore they are exposed to a *shameful calamity*, *ver. 26*, because they have been guilty of a *shameful iniquity*, and yet are shameless in it, *ver. 27*. *I have seen thine adulteries*, thine inordinate fancy for strange gods, which thou hast been impatient for the gratification of, and hast even *neighed* after it; even the *lewdness of thy whoredoms*, thine impudence and insatiableness in them, i. e. thy eager worshipping of idols, *on the hills, in the fields*, upon the high places. This is that for which a *woe* is denounced against thee, O Jerusalem; nay, and many woes.

4. Here is an affectionate exhortation with them in the close upon the whole matter. Though it was adjudged next to impossible for them to be brought to do good, *ver. 23*, yet while there is life there is hope, and therefore still he reasons with them to bring them to repentance, *ver. 27*. (1.) He reasons with them concerning the thing itself: *Wilt thou not be made clean?* Note, It is the great concern of those who are polluted by sin, to be made clean by repentance and faith, and an universal reformation. The reason why sinners are not made clean, is because they will not be made clean; and herein they act most unreasonably. *Wilt thou not be made clean?* Surely thou wilt at length be persuaded to *wash thee*, and *make thee clean*, and so be wise for thyself. (2.) Concerning the time of it: *When shall it once be?* Note, It is an instance of the wonderful grace of God, that he desires the repentance and conversion of sinners, and thinks the time long till they are brought to it: but it is an instance of the wonderful folly of sinners, that they put that off from time to time, which is of absolute necessity; and which, if it be not done some time, they are certainly undone for ever. They do not say they will never be cleaned, but not yet: they will defer it to a more convenient season, but cannot tell us when it shall once be.

C H A P. XIV.

This chapter was penned upon occasion of a great drought, for want of rain: This judgment began in the latter end of Josiah's reign, but as it should seem continued in the beginning of Jehoiakim's: for lesser judgments are sent to give warning of greater coming, if not prevented by repentance. This calamity was mentioned several times before, but here in this chapter more fully. Here is (1.) A melancholy description of it, *ver. 1—6*. (2.) A prayer to God to put an end to this calamity, and to return in mercy to their land, *ver. 7—9*. (3.) A severe threatening, that God would proceed in his controversy, because they proceeded in their iniquity, *ver. 10—12*. (4.) The prophet's excusing the people, by laying the blame on their false prophets; and the doom passed both on the deceivers and the deceived, *ver. 13—16*. (5.) Direction given to the prophet, instead of interceding for them, to lament them; but his continuing notwithstanding to intercede for them, *ver. 17—22*.

1. THE word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth. 2. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. 3. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. 4. Because the ground is chapped, for there was no rain in the earth, the ploughmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. 5. Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. 6. And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass. 7. ¶ O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. 8. O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a way-faring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night? 9. Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

The first verse is the title of the whole chapter: it doth indeed all concern the dearth, but much of it is the prophet's prayers concerning it; yet these are not unfitly said to be, *The word of the Lord which came to him* concerning it; for every acceptable prayer is that which God puts into our hearts: nothing is our word that comes to him, but what is first his word that comes from him. In these verses we have,

1. The language of nature lamenting the calamity. When the heavens were as brass, and distilled no dews, the earth was as iron and produced no fruits; and then what an universal grief and confusion was there!

(1.) The people of the land were all in tears. *Destroy their vines and their fig-trees, and you cause all their mirth to cease*. Hos. ii. 11, 12. All their joy fails with the joy of harvest, with that of their corn and wine, *ver. 2*. Judah mourneth,

mourneth, not for the sin, but for the trouble: for the withholding of the rain, not for the withdrawing of God's favour. *The gates thereof*, i. e. all that go in and out at their gates, *languish*, look pale, and grow feeble, for want of the necessary supports of life, and for fear of the further fatal consequences of this judgment. *The gates*, through which supplies of corn formerly used to be brought into the cities, now look melancholy; when instead of that, the inhabitants are departing through them to seek for bread in other countries. Even those that sit in the gates languish, *they are black unto the ground*, they go in black as mourners, and sit on the ground; as the poor beggars at the gates are *black in the face*, for want of food, *blacker than a coal*, Lam. iv. 8. Famine is represented by a black horse, Rev. vi. 5. They fall to the ground through weakness, not being able to go along the streets. *The cry of Jerusalem is gone up*, i. e. of the inhabitants of Jerusalem: for the city is *served by the field*; or of people from all parts of the country met at Jerusalem to pray for rain, so some. But I think it was rather the cry of their trouble, and the cry of their sin, than the cry of their prayer.

(2.) The men of the land felt from this judgment, *ver. 3. The nobles sent their little ones to the water*, perhaps their own children, having been forced to part with their servants, because they had not wherewithal to keep them; and being willing to train up their children, when they are little, to labour; especially in case of necessity, as this was. We find Ahab and Obadiah, the king and the lord chamberlain of his household, in their own persons seeking for water in such a time of distress as this was, 1 Kings xviii. 5, 6. Or rather, *meaner ones*, their servants, and small officers; these they sent to seek for water, which there is no living without, but there was none to be found; they returned with their vessels empty, the springs were dried up, when there was no rain to feed them; and then they, i. e. their masters that sent them, were *ashamed and confounded* at the disappointment. They would not be ashamed of their sins, nor confounded at the sense of them, but were unhumbled under the reproofs of the word, thinking their wealth and dignity set them above repentance; but God took a course to make them ashamed of that which they were so proud of, when they found that even on this side hell their nobility would not purchase them a drop of water to cool their tongue. Let our reading the account of this calamity make us thankful for the mercy of water, that we may not by the feeling of the calamity be taught to value it. What is most *useful*, is most *plentiful*.

(3.) The husbandmen felt most sensibly and immediately from it, *ver. 4. The ploughmen were ashamed*, for the ground was so parched and hard, that it would not admit the plough; even when it was so *chapt and cleft*, that it seemed as if it did not need the plough. They were ashamed to be idle, for there was nothing to be done, and therefore nothing to be expected. *The sluggard that will not plough by reason of cold*, is not ashamed of his own *folly*; but the diligent husbandman, that cannot plough by reason of heat, is ashamed of his own *affliction*. See what an immediate dependence husbandmen have upon the divine providence, which therefore they should always have an eye to, for they cannot plough or sow in hope, unless God *water their furrows*, Psalm lxx. 10.

(4.) The case even of the wild beasts was very piteous, *ver. 5, 6. Man's sin* brings those judgments upon the earth, which make even the inferior creatures *groan*; and the prophet takes notice of this as a plea with God for mercy; Judah and Jerusalem have sinned, but the hinds and the wild asses, what have they done? The hinds are *pleasant creatures*, lovely and loving, and particularly tender of their young; and yet such is the extremity of the case, that contrary to the instinct of their nature, they *leave their young*, even when they are newly *calved*, and most need them, to go and seek for grass elsewhere; and if they can find none, they *abandon* them, because not able to *suckle* them. It grieved not the hind so much, that she had no grass *for herself*, as that she had none *for her young*; which will shame those who spend that upon their lusts, which they should preserve for their families. The hind, when she has brought forth her young, is said to have *cast forth her sorrows*, Job xxxix. 3. and yet she continues her *cares*; but as it follows there, soon sees the good effect of them, for her *young ones* in a little while *grow up*, and trouble her no more, *ver. 4. But here the great trouble* of all is that she has nothing for them. Nay, one would be sorry even for the *wild asses* (though they are creatures that none have any great affection for) for though the *barren land* is made *their dwelling* at the best, Job xxxix. 5, 6. yet even that is now made too hot for them, so hot that they cannot breathe in it; but they get to the *highest places* they can, where the air is coolest, and *snuff up the wind like dragons*, like those creatures that being naturally exceeding hot, are continually panting for breath. Their *eyes fail*, and so doth their strength, *because there is no grass* to support them. The tame ass that serves her owner, is welcome to his *crib*, Isa. i. 3. and has her keeping for her labour; when the *wild ass*, that *scorns the crying of the driver*, is forced to *live upon the air*, and is well enough served for not serving; *he that will not labour, let him not eat*.

2. Here is the *language of grace*; lamenting the iniquity, and complaining to God of the calamity. The people are not forward to pray, but the prophet here prays for them, and so excites them to pray for themselves, and puts words into their mouths, which they may make use of in hopes to speed, *ver. 7, 8, 9. In this prayer.*

1. Sin is humbly confessed. When we come to pray for the preventing or removing of any judgment, we must acknowledge that we deserve it, and a thousand times worse. We cannot hope by extenuating the crime, to obtain a mitigation of the punishment; but must acknowledge, that *our iniquities testify against us*. Our sins are witnesses against us, and true penitents see them to be so. They *testify*, for they are plain and evident, we cannot deny the charge; they *testify against us*, for our conviction; which tends to our present shame and confusion, and our future condemnation. They disprove and overthrow all our pleas for ourselves; and do not only accuse us, but *answer against us*. If we boast of our excellencies, and trust to our own righteousness, our iniquities *testify against us*, and prove us perverse. If we quarrel with God as dealing unjustly, or unkindly with us in afflicting us, our iniquities testify against us that we do him wrong; for *our backslidings are many*, and *our revolts are great*, whereby we have *sinned against thee*; too numerous to be concealed, for they are *many*; too heinous to be excused, for they are *against thee*.

2. Mercy is earnestly begged. *Though our iniquities testify against us*, and against the granting of the favour which the necessity of our case calls for, yet *do thou it*. They do not say particularly what they would have done; but, as becomes penitents and beggars, they refer themselves to God; do with us as thou thinkest fit, *Judg. x. 15. Not do thou it* in this way, or at this time, but *do thou it for thy name's sake*, i. e. Do that which will be most for the glory of thy name. Note, Our best pleas in prayer are those that are fetched from the glory of God's own name. Lord, do it that thy mercy may be magnified, thy promise fulfilled, and thine interest in the world kept up; we have nothing to plead in *ourselves*, but every thing in *thee*. There is another petition in this prayer, and it is a very modest one, *ver. 9. Leave us not*, withdraw not thy favour and presence. Note, We should dread and deprecate God's departures from us, more than the removal of any of all our creature-comforts.

2. Their relation to God, their interest in him, and their expectations from him grounded thereupon, are most pathetically pleaded with him, *ver. 8, 9.*

1. They look upon him as one they have reason to think should deliver them when they are in distress, yet though their iniquities testify against them; for in him mercy hath often rejoiced against judgment. The prophet like Moses of old, is willing to make the best he can of the case of his people, and therefore though he must own, that *they have sinned many a great sin*, Exod. xxxii. 31. yet he pleads, *Thou art the hope of Israel*; God has encouraged his people to hope in him, in calling himself so often the God of Israel, and the Rock of Israel, and the Holy One of Israel, he hath made himself the *hope of Israel*. He has given Israel his word to hope in, and caused them to hope in it; and there are those yet in Israel that make God alone *their hope*, and expect he will be *their Saviour in time of trouble*, and they look not for salvation in any other; thou hast many a time been so in the time of their extremity. Note, Since God is his people's all-sufficient Saviour, they ought to hope in him in their greatest straits; and since he is their alone Saviour, they ought to hope in him only. They plead likewise, *thou art in the midst of us*, we have the special tokens of thy presence with us, thy temple, thine ark, thine oracles; and *we are called by thy name*, the Israel of God, and therefore we have reason to hope thou wilt not leave us; *we are thine, save us*. Thy name is called upon us, and therefore what evils we are under reflect dishonour upon thee, as if thou wast not able to relieve thine own. The prophet had often told the people, that their profession of religion would not protect them from the judgments of God; yet here he pleads it with God, as Moses, Exod. xxxii. 11. even this may go far as to temporal punishments with a God of mercy, *valent quantum valere potest*.

2. It therefore grieves them to think, that he doth not appear for their deliverance; and though they do not charge it upon them as *unrighteous*, they humbly plead it with him why he should be *gracious*, for the glory of his own name. For otherwise he will seem, (1.) *Unconcerned* for his own people; *what will the Egyptians say*; They will say, Israel's hope and saviour never minds them, he is become as a *stranger in the land*, that does not at all interest himself in its interests; that his temple, which is called *his rest for ever*, is no more so, but he is in it as a *wayfaring man*, that turns aside to tarry but for a night in an inn, which he never enquires in the affairs of, nor is in any care about. Though God never is, yet he sometimes seems to be, as if he cared not what became of his church: Christ slept when his disciples were in a storm. (2.) *Un capable of giving them any relief*: The enemies will say, because the Lord was not able to bring his people to Canaan, he let them *perish in the wilderness*. Num. xiv. 16. so now they will say, that either his wisdom or his power fail him; that either he is as a *man astonished*, who, though he has the reason of a man, yet being astonished, is quite at a loss and at his wit's end; or as a *mighty man*, that is overpowered by such as are more mighty, and therefore *cannot save*; though *mighty*, yet a *man*, and therefore his power limited. Either of these would be a most insufferable reproach to the divine perfections; and therefore why is the God that we are sure is *in the midst of us*, become as a *stranger*? Why doth the almighty God seem as if he were no more than a mighty man; who when he is *astonished*, though he would, yet *cannot save*? It becomes us in prayer to shew ourselves concerned more for God's glory, than for our own comfort: Lord, *what wilt thou do unto thy great name?*

10. ¶ Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them: he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. 11. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. 12. When they fast, I will not hear their cry: and when they offer burnt-offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. 13. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. 14. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of the heart. 15. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land: By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. 16. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

The dispute between God and his prophet in this chapter, seems to be like that between the owner and the dresser of the vineyard concerning the barren fig-tree, Luke xiii. 7. The justice of the owner condemns it to be cut down, the clemency of the dresser intercedes for a reprieve: Jeremiah had been earnest with God in prayer to return in mercy to this people. Now here.

1. God over-rules the plea which he had offered in their favours, and shews him that it would not hold. In answer to it thus he saith, *Concerning this people*, *ver. 10.* He doth not say *concerning my people*, for he disowns them, because they had broken covenant with him. It is true, they were *called by his name*, and had the tokens of his presence among them; but they had sinned, and provoked God to withdraw. This the prophet had owned, and hoped to obtain mercy from them notwithstanding this through intercession and sacrifice; therefore God here tells them.

(1.) That they were not duly qualified for a pardon. The prophet had owned *their backslidings were many*; and though they were so, yet there was hopes for them if they returned; but this people shews no disposition at all to return; they have wandered, and they have loved to wander; their backslidings have been their choice and their pleasure, which should have been their shame and pain, and therefore they will be their ruin. They cannot expect God should take up his rest with them, when they take such delight in:

in going astray from him after their idols. It is not through necessity or inadvertency that they wander, but they *love it*. Sinners are wanderers from God; their wanderings forfeit God's favour, but it is their *loving* to wander that quite cuts them off from it. They were told what their wanderings would come to, that one sin would hurry them on to another; and all to ruin; and yet they have not taken warning, and *restrained their feet*. So far were they from returning to their God, that neither his prophets nor his judgments could prevail with them to give themselves the least check in a sinful pursuit. This is that for which God is now reckoning with them: when he denies them rain from heaven, he is remembering their iniquity, and visiting their sin; that is it for which their fruitful land is thus turned into barrenness.

(2.) That they had no reason to expect, that the God they had rejected should accept them; no not though they betook themselves to fasting and prayer, and put themselves to the expence of burnt-offerings and sacrifice. *The Lord doth not accept them*, ver. 10. *He takes no pleasure in them*, so the word is; for what pleasure can the holy God take in those that take pleasure in his rivals, in any service, in any society rather than his? *When they fast*, ver. 12. which is a proper expression of repentance and reformation; *when they offer a burnt-offering and an oblation*, which was designed to be an expression of faith in a mediator; though their prayers be thus enforced, and offered up in those vehicles that used to be acceptable, yet because they do not proceed from humble, penitent, and renewed hearts, but still they *love to wander*, therefore *I will not hear their cry*, be it never so loud; nor will I accept them, neither their persons, nor their performances. It had been long since declared, *That the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*, and those only are accepted that *do well*, Gen. iv. 7.

(3.) That they had forfeited all benefit by the prophet's prayers for them, because they had not regarded his preaching to them. This is the meaning of that repeated prohibition given to the prophet, ver. 11. *Pray not thou for this people for their good*, as before, chap. xi. 14.—vii. 16. This did not forbid him thus to express his good-will to them. Moses continued to intercede for Israel, after God had said, *Let me alone*, Exod. xxxii. 10. but it forbade them to expect any good effect from it, as long as they turned away their ear from hearing the law. Thus was the doom of the impenitent ratified, as that of Saul's rejection was by that word to Samuel, *when wilt thou cease to mourn for Saul?* It therefore follows, ver. 12. *I will consume them*, not only by this famine, but by the farther sore judgments of sword and pestilence; for God has many arrows in his quiver, and those that will not be convinced and reclaimed by one, shall be consumed by another.

2. The prophet offers another plea in excuse of the people's obstinacy, and it is but an excuse; but he was willing to say whatever their case would bear; it is this, That the prophets, who pretended a commission from heaven, imposed upon them, and flattered them with assurances of peace, though they went on in their sinful way, ver. 13. He speaks of it with lamentation, *Ah, Lord God!* the poor people seem willing to take notice of what comes in thy name, and there are those who in thy name tell them, that they shall not see the sword or famine; and they say it as from thee, with all the gravity and confidence of prophets, *I will continue you in this place*, and will give you assured peace here, peace of truth; I tell them the contrary, but I am one against many, and every one is apt to credit that which makes for them; therefore Lord pity and spare them, for their leaders cause them to err. This excuse had been of some weight if they had not had warning given them before of false prophets, and rules by which to discover them; so that if they were deceived, it was purely their own fault. But this teacheth us, as far as we can with truth, to make the best of bad, and judge us charitably of others, as their case will bear.

3. God not only over-rules this plea, but condemns both the blind leaders and the blind followers to fall together into the ditch.

1. God disowns the flatteries, ver. 14. *They prophesy lies in my name*. They had no commission from God to prophesy at all, *I neither sent them, nor commanded them, nor spake unto them*; they never were employed to go on any errand at all from God, he never made himself known to them, much less by them to the people; never any word of the Lord came to them, no call, no warrant, no instructions, much less did he send them on this errand, to rock them asleep in security. No; men may flatter themselves, and Satan may flatter them; but God never doth. It is a false vision, and a thing of nought. Note, What is false and groundless, is vain and worthless. The vision that is not true, be it never so pleasing, is good for nothing; it is the deceit of their heart, a spider's web spun out of their own bowels, and in it they think to shelter themselves, but it will be swept away in a moment, and prove a great cheat. They that oppose their own thoughts to God's word, God indeed saith so, but they think otherwise, walk in the deceit of their heart, and it will be their ruin.

2. He passeth sentence upon the flatterers, ver. 15. As for the prophets, who put this abuse upon the people, by telling them they shall have peace; and this affront upon God, by telling them so in God's name; let them know, that they shall have no peace themselves. They shall fall first by those very judgments, which they have flattered others with the hopes of an exemption from. They understood to warrant people, that sword and famine should not be in the land; but it shall soon appear how little their warrants are good for, when they themselves shall be cut off by sword and famine. How should they secure others or foretell peace to them, when they cannot secure themselves, nor have such a foresight of their own calamities, as to get out of the way of them. Note, The forest punishments await those who promise sinners impunity in their sinful ways.

3. He lays the flattered under the same doom, ver. 16. *The people to whom they prophesy lies*, and who willingly suffer themselves to be thus imposed upon, they shall die by sword and famine. Note, The unbelief of the deceived, with all the falsehood of the deceivers, shall not make the divine threatenings of none effect; sword and famine will come, whatever they say to the contrary; and those will be least safe that are most secure. Impenitent sinners will not escape the damnation of hell, by saying, they can never believe there is such a thing; but will feel what they will not fear. It is threatened that this people shall not only fall by sword and famine, but they shall be as it were hanged up in chains, as monuments of that divine justice which they set at defiance, their bodies shall be cast out, even in the streets of Jerusalem, which of all places, one would think, should be kept clear from such nuisances: There they shall lie unburied; their nearest relations, who should do them that last office of love, being either so poor, that they cannot afford it; or so weakened with hunger, that they are not able to attend to it; or so overwhelmed with grief, that they have no heart to it; or so destitute of natural affection, that they will not pay them so much respect. Thus will God pour their wickedness upon them. i. e. the punishment of their wickedness; the full vials of God's wrath shall be poured on them, to which they have made themselves obnoxious. Note, When sinners are overwhelmed with trouble, they must in it see their own wickedness poured upon them. This refers to the wickedness both of the false prophets and of the people; the blind lead the blind, and both fall together into the ditch, where they will be miserable comforters one to the other.

17. ¶ Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them, Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. 18. If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not. 19. Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble! 20. We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee. 21. Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us. 22. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.

The present deplorable state of Judah and Jerusalem is here made the matter of the prophet's lamentation, ver. 17, 18. and the occasion of his prayer and intercession for them, ver. 19. and I am willing to hope, that the latter as well as the former is by divine direction; and that these words, ver. 17. *Thus shalt thou say unto them*, or concerning them, or in their hearing, refer to the intercession as well as to the lamentation, and then it amounts to a revocation of the directions given to the prophet not to pray for them, ver. 11. However it is plain, by the prayers we find in these verses, that the prophet did not understand it as a prohibition, but only as a discouragement, like that 1 John v. 16. *I do not say he shall pray for that*.

Here, 1. The prophet stands weeping over the ruins of his country; God directs him to do so, that shewing himself affected, he might if possible affect them with the foresight of the calamities that were coming upon them. Jeremiah must not only say it to himself, but to them too, *let mine eyes run down with tears*, ver. 17. Thus he must signify to them, that he certainly foresaw the sword coming, and another sort of famine, more grievous even than this which they were groaning under; this was in the country for want of rain, that in the city through the fruitfulness of the siege. The prophet speaks as if he already saw the miseries attending the descent which the Chaldeans made upon them; the virgin daughter of my people, that is as dear to me as a daughter to her father, she is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow, much greater and more grievous than any she has yet sustained; for ver. 18. in the field multitudes lie dead that were slain by the sword, and in the city multitudes lie dying for want of food: Doleful spectacles! The prophets and the priests, the false prophets that flattered them with their lies, and the wicked priests that persecuted the true prophets, these are now expelled their country, and go about either as prisoners and captives whithersoever their conquerors lead them, or as fugitives and vagabonds, wherever they can find shelter and relief, in a land that they know not. Some understand it of the true prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, that were carried to Babylon with the rest. The prophet's eyes must run down with tears day and night, in prospect of this, that the people might be convinced, not only that this woeful day would infallibly come, and would be a very woeful day indeed, but that he was far from desiring it, and would as gladly have brought them messages of peace as their false prophets, if he might but have had warrant from heaven to do it. Note, Because God, though he inflicts death on sinners, yet delights not in it, it becomes his ministers, though in his name they pronounce the death of sinners, yet sadly to lament it.

2. He stands up to make intercession for them; for who knows but God will yet return and repent? While there is life there is hope, and room for prayer. And though there were many among them, who neither prayed themselves, nor valued the prophet's prayers, yet there were some who were better affected, would join with him in his devotions, and set the seal of their Amen to them.

1. He humbly expostulates with God concerning the present deplorable state of their case, ver. 19. It was very sad, for, (1.) Their expectations from their God failed them; they thought he had avouched Judah to be his, but now it seems he hath utterly rejected it, and cast it off; will not own any relation to it, or concern for it. However, they thought Zion was the beloved of his soul, was his rest for ever; but now his soul even loathes Zion, loathes even the services there performed, for the sake of the sins there committed. (2.) Then no marvel that all their other expectations failed them; they were smitten, and their wounds were multiplied, but there was no healing for them; they looked for peace, because there used to come after a storm a calm, and fair weather after a long fit of wet, but there was no good; things went still worse and worse: They looked for a healing time, but could not gain so much as a breathing time; behold trouble at the door, by which we hoped peace would enter. And is it so then? Hast thou indeed rejected Judah? Justly thou mightest: Hast thy soul loathed Zion? We deserve it should: But wilt thou not at length in wrath remember mercy?

2. He makes a penitent confession of sin, speaking that language which they all should have spoken, though but few did, ver. 20. *We acknowledge our wickedness*, the abounding wickedness of our land, and the iniquity of our fathers, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. *We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee*, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us, but because we confess our sins, we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins.

3. He deprecates God's displeasure, and by faith appeals to his honour and promise, ver. 21. His petition is, *do not abhor us*; though thou afflict us, do not abhor us: though thy hate be turned against us, let not thy heart be so, nor let thy mind be alienated from us: They own God might justly abhor them, they had rendered themselves odious in his eyes, yet when they pray, do not abhor us, they mean, receive us into favour again. *Let not thy soul loathe Zion*, ver. 19. Let not our iniquity be an abomination. They appeal, (1.) To the honour of God, the honour of his scripture, by which he hath made himself known; his word, which he hath magnified above all, his name; do not abhor us for thy name's sake, that name of thine by which we are called, and which we call upon. The honour of his sanctuary; Lord, do not abhor us, for that will disgrace the throne of thy glory, i. e. the temple, which is called a glorious high throne from the beginning, chap. xvii. 12. Let not that which has been the joy of the whole earth be made a

hissing and an *astonishment*; we deserve to have *disgrace* put upon us, but let it not be so as to reflect upon thyself; let not the desolations of the temple give occasion to the heathen to reproach him that used to be worshipped there, as if he could not or would not protect it, or as if the gods of the Chaldeans had been too hard for him. Note, Good men lay the credit of religion, and its profusion in the world, nearer their hearts than any private interest or concern of their own; and those are powerful pleas in prayer which are fetched from thence, and great supports to faith. We may be sure God will not *disgrace the throne of his glory* on earth: nor eclipse the glory of his throne by one providence, but he will soon make it shine forth, and more brightly than before, by another; God will be no loser in his honour at the long run. (2.) To the promise of God; of this they are humbly bold to put him in mind, *remember thy covenant with us, and break not that covenant*. Not that they had any distrust of his fidelity, or that they thought he needed to be put in mind of his promise to them, but what he had said he would plead with himself, they take the liberty to plead with him; *then will I remember my covenant*, Lev. xxvi. 42.

4. He professeth a dependence upon God for the mercy of rain, which they were now in want of, ver. 22. If they have forfeited their interest in him as their God in covenant, yet they will not let go their hold as the God of nature. (1.) They will never make their application to the idols of the heathen, for that would be foolish and fruitless; *are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?* No, in a time of great drought in Israel, Baal, though all Israel was at his devotion in the days of Ahab, yet he could not relieve them: it was that God only who answered by fire, that could answer by water too. (2.) They will not terminate their regards in second causes, nor expect supply from nature only; *can the heavens give showers?* No, not without orders from the God of heaven; for it is he that has the key of the clouds, that opens the bottles of heaven, and waters the earth from his chambers. But, (3.) All their expectation therefore is from him, and their confidence in him. *Art not thou he, O Lord our God, from whom we may expect succour, and to whom we must apply ourselves?* And art not thou he that *causeth rain, and givest showers*, for thou hast made all these things, thou gavest them being, and therefore thou givest them law, and hast them all at thy command; thou madest that moisture in nature, which is in a continual circulation, to serve the intentions of providence, and thou directest it, and makest what use thou pleasest of it; *therefore we will wait upon thee, and upon thee only*; we will *up of the Lord rain*, Zech. x. 1. We will trust in him to give it us in due time, and be willing to tarry his time; it is fit we should, and it will not be in vain to do so. Note, The sovereignty of God should engage, and his all-sufficiency encourage our attendance on him, and our expectations from him at all times.

C H A P. XV.

When we left the prophet in the close of the foregoing chapter, so pathetically pouring out his prayers before God, we had reason to hope, that in this chapter we should find God reconciled to the land, and the prophet brought into a quiet, composed frame; but to our great surprise we find it much otherwise as to both. (1.) Notwithstanding the prophet's prayers, God here ratifies the sentence given against the people, and abandons them to ruin, turning a deaf ear to all the intercessions made for them, ver. 1—9. (2.) The prophet himself, notwithstanding the satisfaction he had in communion with God, still finds himself uneasy and out of temper. (1.) He complains to God of his continual struggle with his persecutors, ver. 10. (2.) God assures him, that he shall be taken under special protection, though there was a general desolation coming upon the land, ver. 11—14. (3.) He appeals to God concerning his sincerity in the discharge of his prophetic office, and thinks it hard he should not have more of the comfort of it, ver. 15—18. (4.) Fresh security is given him, that upon condition he continue faithful, God will continue his care of him and favour to him, ver. 19—22. And thus at length we hope he regained the possession of his own soul.

1. **THE** LORD said unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth. 2. And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. 3. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy. 4. And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem. 5. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest? 6. Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting. 7. And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land: I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways. 8. Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men, a spoiler at noon-day: I have caused him to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city. 9. She that hath born seven, languisheth: she hath given up the ghost; her son is gone down while it was yet day: she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD.

We scarce find anywhere more pathetic expressions of divine wrath against a provoking people, than we have here in these verses. The prophet

had prayed earnestly for them, and found some among them to join with him; and yet not so much as a reprieve was gained, or the least mitigation of the judgment; but this answer is given to the prophet's prayers, that the decree was gone forth, was irrevocable, and would shortly be executed. Observe here,

1. What the sin was upon which this severe sentence was grounded. (1.) It is in remembrance of a former iniquity; it is because of Manasseh, for that which he did in Jerusalem, ver. 4. What that was we are told, and that it was for that Jerusalem was destroyed, 1 Kings xxiv. 3, 4. It was for his idolatry, and the innocent blood which he shed, which the Lord would not pardon. He is called the son of Hezekiah, because his relation to so good a father was a great aggravation of his sin, so far was it from being an excuse of it. The greatest part of a generation was worn off since Manasseh's time, yet his sin is brought into the account; as in Jerusalem's last ruin God brought upon it all the righteous blood shed on the earth, to show how heavy the guilt of blood will light and lie somewhere sooner or later, and that reprieves are not pardons. (2.) It is in consideration of their present impenitency. See how their sin is described, ver. 6. *Thou hast forsaken me, my service and thy duty to me; thou art gone backward*, into the ways of contradiction, art become the reverse of what thou shouldst have been, and of what God by his law would have led thee forward to; and see how the impenitency is described, ver. 7. *they return not from their ways*, the ways of their own hearts, into the ways of God's commandments again. There is mercy for those who have turned aside, if they will return; but what favour can they expect that persist in their apostacy?

2. What the sentence is. It is such as speaks no less than an utter ruin.

1. God himself abandons and abhors them. *My mind cannot be towards them*. How can it be thought, that the holy God should have any remaining complacency in those that have such a rooted antipathy to him? It is not in a passion, but with a just and holy indignation that he saith, *cast them out of my sight*, as that which is in the highest degree odious and offensive; and let them go forth, for I will be troubled with them no more.

2. He will not admit any intercession to be made for them; ver. 1. Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, by prayer or sacrifice, to reconcile me to them, yet I could not be prevailed with to admit them into favour. Moses and Samuel were two as great favourites of heaven as ever were the blessings of this earth, and were particularly famed for the success of their mediation between God and his offending people; many a time they had been destroyed, if Moses had not stood before him in the breach; and to Samuel's prayers they owe their lives, 1 Sam. xii. 19. yet even their intercessions should not prevail, no, not though they were now in a state of perfection; much less Jeremiah's, who was a man now subject to like passions as others. The putting of this as a case, *though they should stand before me*, supposeth that they do not, and is an intimation, that saints in heaven are not intercessors for sinners on earth. It is the prerogative of the Eternal Word to be the only mediator in the other world, whatever Moses, and Samuel, and others were in this.

3. He condemns them all to one destroying judgment or other. When God calls them out of his presence, *whither shall they go forth?* ver. 2. Certainly no whither to be safe or easy; but to be met by one judgment, while they are pursued by another, till they find themselves surrounded with miseries on all hands, so that they cannot escape. Such as are for death, to death: by death here is meant the pestilence, Rev. vi. 8. for it is death without visible means. Those that are for death to death, or for the sword to the sword, i. e. every man shall perish in that way that God hath appointed: the law that appoints the malefactor's death, determines what death he shall die. Or he that is by his own choice for this judgment, let him take it, or for that, let him take it, but by the one or the other they shall all fall, and none shall escape. It is a choice like that which David was put to, and was thereby put into a great strait, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. Captivity is mentioned last, some think, because the forest judgment of all, it being both a complication and continuance of miseries. That of the sword, is again repeated, ver. 3. and is made the first of another four frightful set of destroyers, which God will appoint over them, as officers over the soldiers, to do what they please with them. As those that escape the sword, yet shall be cut off by pestilence, famine, or captivity; so those that fall by the sword, yet divine vengeance has not done with them, that pursues sinners on the other side death: there shall be dogs to tear in the city, and fowls of the air and wild beasts in the field to devour. And if there be any that think to out-run justice, they shall be made the most public monuments of it; *They shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth*, ver. 1. like Cain, who, that he might be made a spectacle of horror to all, became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.

4. They shall fall without being relieved: who can do any thing to help them? When (1.) God even their own God (so he had been) appears against them; *I will stretch out my hand against thee*; which notes a deliberate, determined stroke, which will reach far and wound deep; ver. 6. *I am weary with repenting*; it is a strange expression; they had carried themselves so provokingly, especially by their treacherous professions of repentance, that they had put even infinite patience itself to the stretch. God had oftentimes turned away his wrath, when it was ready to break forth against them; but now he will grant no more reprieves. Miserable is the case of those, who have sinned so long against God's mercy, that at length they have sinned it away. (2.) Their own country expels them, and is ready to spurn them out, as it had done the Canaanites that were before them: for so it was threatened, Lev. xviii. 28. *I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land*, in their own gates, through which they shall be scattered; or, *into the gates of the earth*, i. e. into the cities of all the nations about them. (3.) Their own children, that should assist them when they speak with the enemy in the gate, shall be cut off from them, ver. 7. *I will bereave them of children*; so that they shall have little hopes that the next generation will retrieve their affairs, for *I will destroy my people*; and when the inhabitants are slain, the land will soon be desolate. This melancholy article is enlarged upon, ver. 8, 9. where we have,

1. The destroyer brought upon them. When God has bloody work to do, he will find out bloody instruments to do it with. Nebuchadnezzar is here called a *spoiler at noon-day*: not a thief in the night, that is afraid of being discovered, but one that without fear shall break through and destroy all the fences of rights and properties, and this in the face of the sun and denance of its light. *I have brought against the mother a young man, a spoiler*, so some read it; for Nebuchadnezzar, when he first invaded Judah, was but a young man, in the first year of his reign. We read it, *I have brought upon them, even against the mother of the young men, a spoiler*, i. e. against Jerusalem, a mother-city, that had a very numerous family of young men; or, that invasion was in a particular manner terrible to those mothers, who had many sons fit for war, who must now jeopard their lives in the high places of the field; and being an unequal match for the enemy, would be likely to fall there, to the inexpressible grief of their poor mothers, that had nursed them up with a deal of tenderness. And the same God that brought the spoiler upon them, caused him to fall upon it, i. e. upon the spoil delivered

delivered to him, *suddenly* and by surprise; and then *terrors* came upon the city. The original is very abrupt, *the city and terrors: O the city*, what a conformation will it then be in! *O the terrors* that shall then seize it! then the city and terrors shall be brought together, that seemed at a distance from each other. *I will cause to fall suddenly upon her* (i. e. upon Jerusalem) *a watcher and terrors*, so Mr. Gataker reads it, for the word is used for a watcher, *Dan. iv. 13—23*, and the Chaldean soldiers were called *watchers*, *chap. iv. 16*.

(2.) The destruction made by this destroyer. A dreadful slaughter is here described. (1.) The wives are deprived of their husbands; *their widows are increased above the sand of the seas*, so numerous are they now grown; it was promised that the men of Israel (for those only were numbered) should be as the sand of the sea for multitude, but now they shall be all cut off, and their widows shall be so. But observe, God saith, *they are increased to me*: though the husbands were cut off by the sword of his justice, their poor widows were gathered in the arms of his mercy, who has taken it among the titles of his honour to be the God of the widows: widows are said to be taken into the number, the number of those whom God has a particular compassion and concern for. (2.) The parents are deprived of their children. *She that has born seven sons*, whom she expected to be the support and joy of her age, now *languisheth* when she hath seen them all cut off by the sword in one day, who had been many years her burden and care. *She that had many children is waven, feeble*, 1 Sam. ii. 5. See what uncertain comforts children are, and let us therefore rejoice in them, *as though we rejoiced not*. When the children are slain, the mother gives up the ghost, for her life was bound up in their's: *Her sin is gone down while it was yet day*: she is bereaved of her comforts then when she thought herself in the midst of the enjoyment of them. She is now *ashamed and confounded* to think how proud she had been of her sons, how fond of them, and how much she promised herself from them. Some understand by this languishing mother, Jerusalem lamenting the death of her inhabitants as passionately, as ever poor mother bewailed her children. Many are cut off already, *and the residue of them*, who have yet escaped, and it was hoped were reserved to be the seed of another generation, even they *will I deliver to the sword before their enemies*, as the condemned malefactor is delivered to the sheriff to be executed, *saith the Lord*, the judge of heaven and earth, who we are sure herein judgeth right, though the judgment seem severe.

5. They shall fall without being pitied, *ver. 5. For who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem?* when thy God hath cast thee out of his sight, and his compassions fail, and are shut up from thee, neither thine enemies, nor thy friends shall have any compassion for thee. They shall have no sympathy with thee, they shall not *bemoan thee*, or be sorry for thee, they shall have no concern for thee, shall not go a step out of their way to *ask how thou doest*. For, (1.) Their friends who were expected to do these friendly offices were all involved with them in the calamities, and had enough to do to bemoan themselves. (2.) It was plain to all their neighbours that they had brought all this misery upon themselves by their obduracy in sin, and they might easily have prevented it by repentance and reformation, which they were often in vain called to, and therefore *who can pity them? O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!* Those will perish for ever unpitied, that might have been saved upon such easy terms, and would not. (3.) God will thus complete their misery, he will set their acquaintance as he did Job's, at a distance from them: and his hand, his righteous hand, is to be acknowledged in all the unkindnesses of our friends, as well as in all the injuries done us by our foes.

10. ¶ Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury: yet every one of them doth curse me. 11. The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction. 12. Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel? 13. Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders. 14. And I will make thee to pass with thine enemies into a land which thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you.

Jeremiah is now returned from his public work, and is retired into his closet; what passed between him and his God there, we have an account of in these and the following verses, which he published afterwards to affect the people with the weight and importance of his messages to them. Here is,

1. The complaint which the prophet makes to God of the many discouragements met with in his work, *ver. 10*.

(1.) He met with a great deal of contradiction and opposition. He was a man of strife and contention to the whole land, so it might be read, rather than to the whole earth, for his business lay only in that land; both city and country quarrelled with him, and set themselves against him, and said and did all they could to thwart him. He was a peaceable man, gave no provocation to any, nor was apt to resent the provocations given him, and yet a man of strife, i. e. not a man striving, but a man striven with: he was for peace, but when he spoke, they were for war. And whatever they pretended, that which was the real cause of their quarrels with him, was his faithfulness to God and to their souls: he shewed them their sins that were working their ruin, and put them into a way to prevent that ruin, which was the greatest kindness he could do them; and yet this was it for which they were incensed against him, and looked upon him as their enemy. Even the prince of peace himself was thus a man of strife, a sign spoken against, continually enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself. And the gospel of peace brings division, even to fire and sword, *Matt. x. 34, 35. Luke xii. 49—51*. Now this made Jeremiah very uneasy, even to a degree of impatience; he cried out, *Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast born me!* As if it were his mother's fault that she bore him, and he had better never have been born, than be born to such an uncomfortable life; nay, he is angry that she had born him a man of strife: as if he had been fatally determined to this by the stars that were in the ascendant at his birth. If he had any meaning of this kind, doubtless it was his infirmity; we rather hope it was intended for no more but a pathetic lamentation of his own case. Note, 1. Even those who are most quiet and peaceable, yet if they serve God faithfully, are often made men of strife. We can but follow peace: have the making only of one side of the bargain, and therefore can but, as much as in us lies, live peaceably. 2. It is very uncomfortable to

those who are of a peaceable disposition, to live among those that are continually picking quarrels with them. 3. Yet if we cannot live so peaceably as we desire with our neighbours, we must not be so disturbed at it as thereby to lose the repose of our own minds, and put ourselves upon the fret.

(2.) He met with a great deal of contempt, contumely, and reproach: They every one of them *curst him*; they branded him as a turbulent, factious man, as an incendiary, and a sower of discord and sedition. They ought to have blessed him, and to have blessed God for him; but they were arrived to such a pitch of enmity against God and his word, that for his sake they *curst* his messenger, spoke ill of him, wished ill to him, did all they could to make him odious, they all did so; he had scarce one friend in Judah or Jerusalem that would give him a good word. Note, It is often the lot of the best of men to be put under the worst of characters; so persecuted they the prophets. But one would be apt to suspect, that surely Jeremiah had given them some provocation, else he could not have lost himself thus: no, not the least, I have neither lent money, nor borrowed money; have been neither creditor or debtor, for so generally is the signification of the words here. (1.) It is implied here, that those who deal much in the business of this world, are often involved thereby in strife and contention: *meum and tuum* are the great make-bates, lenders and borrowers sue and are sued, and great dealers often get a deal of ill-will. (2.) It was an instance of Jeremiah's great prudence, and it is written for our learning, that being called to be a prophet, he entangled not himself in the affairs of this life, but kept clear from them, that he might apply himself the more closely to the business of his profession, and might not give the least umbrage of suspicion that he aimed at secular advantages in it, nor any occasion to his neighbours to contend with him. He put out no money, for he was no usurer, nor indeed had no money to lend: he took up no money, for he was no purchaser, nor merchant, no spend-thrift. He was perfectly dead to this world, and the things of it: a very little served to keep him, and we find, *chap. xvi. 2*, he had neither wife nor children to keep. And yet, (3.) Though he carried himself thus discreetly, and so as one would have thought should have gained him an universal esteem, yet he lay under a general odium through the iniquity of the times. Blessed be God, as bad as things are with us, they are not so bad, but there are those with whom virtue has its praise; yet let not those who carry themselves most prudently, think it strange if they have not the respect and esteem they deserve. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

2. The answer which God gave to this complaint. Though there was in it a mixture of passion and infirmity, yet God graciously took cognisance of it, because it was for his sake that the prophet suffered reproach. In this answer,

1. God assures him that he should weather the storm, and he made easy at last, *ver. 11*. Though his neighbours quarrelled with him for what he did in the discharge of his office, yet God accepted him, and promised to stand by him. And it is in the original expressed in the form of an oath, *if I take not care of thee, let me never be counted faithful; verily it shall go well with thy remnant*, i. e. with the remainder of thy life, for so the word signifies. The residue of thy days shall be more comfortable to thee, than those hitherto have been. *Thy end shall be good*; so the Chaldee reads it. Note, It is a great and sufficient support to the people of God, that how troublesome soever their way may be, it shall be well with them in their latter end, *Psal. xxxvii. 37*. They have still a remnant, a residue, something behind, and left in reserve, which will be sufficient to balance all their grievances, and the hope of it to make them easy. It should seem, Jeremiah, besides the vexation that his people gave him, was uneasy at the apprehension he had of sharing largely in the public judgments which he foresaw coming; and though he mentioned not this, God replied to his thought of it, as to Moses, *Exod. iv. 19*. Jeremiah thought if his friends were thus abusive to him, what would his enemies be? And God had thought fit to awaken in him an expectation of this kind, *chap. xii. 5*. But here he quiets his mind with this promise, *Verily, I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil*, when all about thee shall be laid waste. Note, God has all men's hearts in his hand, and can turn those to favour his servants, whom they were most afraid of. And the prophets of the Lord have often met with fairer and better treatment among open enemies, than among those that call themselves his people. When we see trouble coming, and it looks very threatening, yet let us not despair, but hope in God, because it may prove better than likely. This promise was accomplished, when Nebuchadnezzar having taken the city, charged the captain of the guard to be kind to Jeremiah, and let him have every thing he had a mind to, *chap. xxxix. 11, 12*. The following words, *ver. 12. Shall common iron break the northern iron, and the steel, or brass?* being compared with the promise of God made to Jeremiah, *chap. i. 18*, that he would make him an iron pillar and brasen walls, seem intended for his comfort. They were continually clashing with him, and were rough and hard as iron, but Jeremiah being armed with power and courage from on high, is as northern iron, which is naturally stronger, and as steel which is hardened by art, and therefore they shall not prevail against him; compare this with *Ezek. ii. 6—iii. 8, 9*. And he might the better bear their quarrelling with him when he was sure of the victory.

2. God assures him that his enemies and persecutors should be lost in the storm, should be ruined at last, and therein the word of God in his mouth should be accomplished, and he should be proved a true prophet, *ver. 13, 14*. God here turns his speech from the prophet to the people. And to them also, *ver. 12*, may be applied, *Shall iron break the northern iron, and the steel?* Shall their courage and strength, and the most hardy and vigorous of their efforts, be able to contest either with the counsel of God, or with the army of the Chaldeans, which are as inflexible, as invincible, as the northern iron and the steel? Let them therefore hear their doom; *Thy substance and thy treasure will I give to the spoil*, and that without price, the spoilers shall have it gratis, it shall be to them a cheap and easy prey. Observe, The prophet was poor, he neither lent nor borrowed, he had nothing to lose, neither substance nor treasure, and therefore the enemy will treat him well. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator*: But the people that had great estates in money and land, would be slain for what they had, or the enemy finding they had much, would use them hardly to make them confess more. And it is their own iniquity that herein corrects them, it is for all thy sins, even in all thy borders: all parts of the country, even those which lay most remote, had contributed to the national guilt, and all shall now be brought to account. Let not one tribe lay the blame upon another, but each take shame to themselves; it is for all thy sins in all thy borders. Thus shall they stay at home till they see their estates ruined, and then they shall be carried into captivity, to spend the sad remains of a miserable life in slavery: *I will make thee to pass with thine enemies*, that shall lead thee in triumph, into a land that thou knowest not, and therefore canst expect to find no comfort in it. And all this is the fruit of God's wrath: it is a fire kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you, and if not extinguished in time will burn eternally.

15. ¶ O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long-suffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. 16. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts. 17. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand; for thou hast filled me with indignation. 18. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail? 19. ¶ Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. 20. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD. 21. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

Here as before, we have,

1. The prophet's humble address to God, containing a remonstrance both of his integrity, and of the hardships he underwent notwithstanding. It is a matter of comfort to us, that whatever ails us we have a God to go to, before whom we may spread our case, and to whose omniscience we may appeal, as the prophet here, *O Lord, thou knowest*. Thou dost know my sincerity, which men are resolved they will not acknowledge: thou dost know my distress, which men disdain to take notice of. Observe here,

1. What it is that the prophet prays for, ver. 15. (1.) That God would consider his case, and be mindful of him. *O Lord, remember me*. Think upon me for good. (2.) That God would communicate strength and comfort to him; *visit me*, not only remember me, but let me know that thou rememberest me, that thou art nigh unto me. (3.) That he would appear for him against those that did him wrong, *revenge me of my persecutors*, or rather, *vindicate me from my persecutors*: Give judgment against them, and let that judgment be executed so far as is necessary for my vindication, and to compel them to acknowledge that they have done me wrong; and farther, a good man will not desire that God would revenge him. Let something be done to convince the world that (whatever blasphemers say to the contrary) Jeremiah is a righteous man, and the God whom he serves is a righteous God. (4.) That he would yet spare him and continue him in the land of the living; *take me not away* by a sudden stroke, but *in thy long-suffering* lengthen out my days. The best men will own themselves so obnoxious to God's wrath, that they are indebted to his patience for the continuance of their lives. Or, while thou exercise long-suffering towards my persecutors, let not them prevail to take me away. Though in a passion he complained of his birth, ver. 10. yet he desires here that his death might not be hastened; *for life is sweet* to nature; the life of an useful man is so to grace. *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world*.

2. What it is that he pleads with God for mercy and relief against his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers. (1.) That God's honour was interested in that case. *Know, and make it known, that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke*. Those that lay themselves open to reproach by their own fault and folly, have great reason to bear it patiently, but no reason to expect that God should appear for them: but if it is for doing well that we suffer ill, and for righteousness' sake that we have all manner of evil laid against us, we may hope that God will vindicate our honour with his own. To the same purpose, ver. 16. *I am called by thy name, O Lord of hosts*; it was for that reason that his enemies hated him, and therefore for that reason he promised himself that God would own him, and stand by him.

(2.) That the word of God which he was employed to preach to others, he had experienced the power and pleasure of in his own soul, and therefore had the graces of the Spirit to qualify him for the divine favour, as well as his gifts. We find some rejected of God, who yet could say, *Lord we have prophesied in thy name*: but Jeremiah could say more, ver. 16. *Thy words were found, found by me*; he searched the scriptures, diligently studied the law, and found that in it which was reviving to him: if we seek we shall find; found for me, the words which he was to deliver to others, were laid ready to his hand, were brought to him by inspiration, and I did not only taste them, but eat them, received them entirely, conversed with them intimately, they were welcome to me, as food to one that is hungry; I entertained them, digested them, turned them *in succum & sanguinem*, into blood and spirits, and was myself delivered into the mold of those truths which I was to deliver to others. The prophet was bid to eat the roll, Ezek. ii. 8. *Rev. x. 9. I did eat it*, that is, as it follows, it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, nothing could be more agreeable. Understand it, (1.) Of the message itself he was to deliver. Though he was to foretell the ruin of his country, which was dear to him, and in the ruin of which he could not but have a deep share, yet all natural affections were swallowed up in zeal for God's glory, and even these messages of wrath being divine messages, were a satisfaction to him. He also rejoiced at first in hope that the people would take warning, and prevent the judgment. Or, (2.) Of the commission he received to deliver this message: though the work he was called to was not attended with any secular advantages, but on the contrary exposed him to contempt and persecution, yet because it put him in a way to serve God and do good, he took pleasure in it, was glad to be so employed, and it was his meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him: John iv. 14. Or, (3.) Of the promise God gave him, that he would assist and own him in his work, chap. i. 8. he was satisfied in that, and depended upon it, and therefore hoped it should not fail him.

(3.) That he had applied himself to the discharge of his office with all possible gravity, and seriousness, and self-denial, though he had had of late but little satisfaction in it, ver. 17. (1.) It is his comfort that he had given up himself wholly to the business of his office, and had done nothing disagreeable to it; nothing either to divert himself from it, or dissipate himself for it. He kept no unsuitable company, denied himself the use even of lawful recreations, abstained from every thing that looked like levity, lest thereby he should make himself mean and less regarded. He sat alone, spent a

deal of time in his closet, because of the hand of the Lord that was strong upon him to carry him on in his work, Ezek. iii. 14. *For thou hast filled me with indignation*, with such messages of wrath against this people, as have made me always pensive. Note, it will be a comfort to God's ministers when men despise them, if they have the testimonies of their consciences for them, that they have not by any vain, foolish carriage made themselves despicable; that they have been dead not only to the wealth of the world, as this prophet was, ver. 10. but to the pleasures of it too, as here. But, (2.) It is his complaint that he had had but little pleasure in his work. It was at first the rejoicing of his heart, but of late it had made him melancholy; so that he had no heart to sit in the meeting of those that make merry, he cared not for company, for indeed no company cared for him, he sat alone fretting at the people's obstinacy, and the little success of his labours among them; this filled him with a holy indignation. Note, It is the folly and infirmity of some good people, that they lose much of the pleasantness of their religion by the fretfulness and uneasiness of their natural temper, which they humour and indulge instead of mortifying it.

(4.) He throws himself upon God's pity and promise in a very passionate expostulation, ver. 18. *Why is my pain perpetual*, and nothing done to ease it? *The wounds* which my enemies are continually giving, both to my peace and to my reputation, incurable, and nothing done to retrieve either my comfort or my credit? I once little thought I should have been thus neglected; will the God that has promised me his presence, be to me as a liar; the God on whom I depend, be to me as waters that fail? we are willing to make the best we can of it, and to make it as an appeal, (1.) To the mercy of God; I know he will not let the pain of his servant be perpetual, but he will ease it, will not let his wound be incurable, but he will heal it; and therefore I will not despair. (2.) To his faithfulness. *Wilt thou be to me as a liar?* No, I know thou wilt not; God is not a man that he should lie. The fountain of life will never be to his people as waters that fail.

2. God's gracious answer to this address, ver. 19, 20, 21. Though the prophet betrayed much human frailty in his address, yet God vouchsafed to answer him with good words and comfortable words, for he knows our frame. Observe,

1. What God here requires of him as the condition of the further favours he designed him. Jeremiah had done and suffered much for God, yet God is no debtor to him, but he is still upon his good behaviour. God will own him; but,

1. He must recover his temper, and be reconciled to his work, and friends with it again, and not quarrel with it any more as he had done. He must return; must shake off these distrustful, discontented thoughts and passions, and not give way to them, must regain the peaceable possession and enjoyment of himself, and resolve to be easy. Note, When we have stepped aside into any disagreeable frame or way, our care must be to return, and compose ourselves into a right temper of mind again; and then we may expect God will help us, if thus we endeavor to help ourselves.

(2.) He must resolve to be faithful in his work, for he could not any longer expect the divine protection than he did approve himself so. Though there was no cause at all to charge Jeremiah with unfaithfulness, and God knew his heart to be sincere, yet God saw fit to give him this caution. Those that do their duty, must not take it ill to be told their duty. In two things, he must be faithful:

(1.) He must distinguish between some and others of those he preached to. Thou must take forth the precious from the vile. The righteous are the precious, be they never so mean and poor, the wicked are the vile, be they never so rich and great: in our congregations there are mixed, wheat and chaff in the same floor, we cannot distinguish them by name, but we must by character, and must give to each their portion, speaking comfort to precious saints, and terror to vile sinners; neither making the heart of the righteous sad, nor strengthening the hands of the wicked, Ezek. xiii. 27, but rightly dividing the word of truth. Ministers must take those whom they see to be precious into their bosoms, and not sit alone as Jeremiah did, but keep up conversation with those they may do good to and get good by.

(2.) He must closely adhere to his instructions, and not in the least vary from them; let them return to thee, but return not thou to them. That is, he must do the utmost he can in his preaching to bring people up to the mind of God; tell them they must at their peril comply with that: they that had flown off from him, that did not like the terms upon which God's favour was offered to them, let them return to thee, and upon second thoughts come up to the terms and strike the bargain; but do not thou return to them, do not compliment them, or comply with them, nor think to make the matter easier to them than the word of God has made it. Men's hearts and lives must come up to God's law and comply with that, for God's law will never come down to them or comply with them.

2. What he here promiseth them upon the performance of these conditions. If he approve himself well,

1. God will quiet his mind, and pacify the present tumult of his spirits. *If thou return, I will bring thee again*; will restore thy soul, as Psalm xxiii. 3. The best and strongest hints if at any time they have gone aside out of the right way, and are determined to return, yet need the grace of God to bring them again.

2. God will employ him in his service as a prophet, work which, even in those bad times, had comfort and honour enough in it to be its own wages. *Thou shalt stand before me*, to receive instructions from me, as a servant from his master; and *thou shalt be as my mouth* to deliver my messages to the people, as an ambassador is the mouth of the prince that sends him. Note, Faithful ministers are God's mouth to us: they are so to look upon themselves, and to speak God's mind, and as becomes the oracles of God; and we are so to look upon them, and to hear God speaking to us by them. Observe, If thou keep close to thine instructions, thou shalt be as my mouth, not otherwise; so far and no farther God will stand by ministers, as they go by the written word. *Thou shalt be as my mouth*, i. e. what thou sayest shall be made good, as if I myself had said it. See Isa. xlv. 26. 1 Sam. iii. 19.

3. He shall have strength and courage to face the many difficulties he meets with in his work, and his spirit shall not fail again as now it doth, ver. 20. *I will make thee unto this people as a fenced brasen wall*, which the storm batters and beats violently upon, but cannot shake. *Return not thou to them*, by any sinful compliances, and then trust thy God to arm thee by his grace with holy resolutions. Be not sneaking, and God will make thee daring. He had complained, that he was made a man of strife; expect that, saith God, they shall fight against thee; they will still continue their opposition, but they shall not prevail against thee, to drive thee off from thy work, or to cut thee off from the land of the living.

4. He shall have God for his protector and mighty deliverer; *I am with thee to save thee*. Those that have God with them, have a Saviour with them, who hath wisdom and strength enough to deal with the most formidable enemy; and those that are with God, and faithful to him, he will deliver them, ver. 21. either from trouble or through it. They may perhaps fall into the hand of the wicked, and they may appear terrible to them, but God will rescue them out of their hands. They shall not be able to kill them,

them, till they have finished their testimony: they shall not prevent their happiness. God will *deliver them*, as to *preserve them to his heavenly kingdom*, 2 Tim. iv. 18, and that is deliverance enough. There are many things that appear very *frightful*, that yet do not prove at all *hurtful* to a good man.

C H A P XVI.

In this chapter, (1.) The greatness of the calamity that was coming upon the Jewish nation, is illustrated by prohibitions given to the prophet, *neither to sit up a house of his own*, ver. 1—1. *nor to go into the house of mourning*, ver. 5, 6, 7. *nor into the house of feasting*, ver. 8, 9. (2.) God is justified in these severe proceedings against them, by an account of their great wickedness, ver. 10—13. (3.) An intimation is given of mercy in reserve, ver. 14, 15. (4.) Some hopes are given that the punishment of the sin should prove the reformation of the sinners, and that they should return to God at length in a way of duty, and so be qualified for his returns to them in a way of favour, ver. 14—21.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD came also unto me, saying, 2. Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place. 3. For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place; and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; 4. They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented: neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. 5. For thus saith the LORD; Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament or bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, even loving-kindness and mercies. 6. Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them: 7. Neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother. 8. Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink. 9. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.

The prophet is here for a sign to the people; they would not regard what he said, let it be tried whether they will regard what he doeth: In general, he must carry himself so in every thing, as became one that expected to see his country in ruins very shortly. This he foretold, but few regarded the prediction; therefore he is to shew that he is himself fully satisfied in the truth of it; Others go on in their usual course, but he in the prospect of these sad times is forbidden, and therefore forbears marriage, mourning for the dead, and mirth. Note, Those that would convince others of, and affect them with the word of God, must make it appear even in the most self-denying instances, that they do believe it themselves, and are affected with it. Would we rouse others out of their security, and persuade them to sit loose to the world? we must ourselves be mortified to present things, and shew that we expect the dissolution of them.

1. Jeremiah must not marry, nor think of having a family, and being a housekeeper, ver. 2. *Thou shalt not take thee a wife*, nor think of having sons and daughters in this place, not in the land of Judah, not in Jerusalem, not in Anathoth. The Jews, more than any people, valued themselves by their early marrying, and their numerous offspring. But Jeremiah must live a bachelor, not so much in honour of virginity, as in diminution of it; by this it appears that it was *advisable* and *seasonable* only in calamitous times, and times of present distress, 1 Cor. vii. 26. That it is so, is a part of the calamity. There may be a time when it will be said, *blessed is the womb that bare not*, Luke xxiii. 29. And when we see such times at hand, it is wisdom for all, especially for prophets, to keep themselves as much as may be from being entangled with the affairs of this life, and incumbered with that which, the dearer it is to them, the more it will be the matter of their care, and fear, and grief, at such a time. The reason here given is, because the fathers and mothers, the sons and the daughters, shall die of grievous deaths, ver. 3, 4. And those that have wives and children, (1.) They will have such a clog upon them, that they cannot flee from those deaths. A single man may make his escape and shift for his own safety, when he that has a wife and children, can neither find means to convey them with him, nor find in his heart to go and leave them behind him. (2.) They will be in continual terror for fear of those deaths, and the more they have to lose by them, the greater will the terror and consternation be, when death appears every where in its triumphant pomp and power. (3.) The death of every child, and the aggravating circumstances of it, will be a new death to the parent: Better have no children, than have them brought forth and bred up for the murderer, Hos. ix. 13, 14. than see them live and die in misery. Death is grievous, but some deaths are more grievous than others, both to them that die, and to their relations that survive them: Hence we read of *so great a death*, 2 Cor. i. 10. Two things are used a little to palliate and alleviate the terror of death, as to this world, and to sugar the bitter pill; bewailing the dead and burying them; but to make those deaths grievous indeed, these are denied; *they shall not be lamented*, but shall be carried off as if all the world were weary of them; nay, they shall not be buried, but left exposed, as if they were designed to be monuments of justice. They shall be as dung upon the face of the earth, not only despicable, but detestable, as if they were good for nothing but to muck the ground; and being consumed some by the sword, and some by famine, their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and the beasts of the earth. Will not any one say, better be without children than live to see them come to this? What

reason have we to say, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, when those creatures that we expect should be our greatest comforts, may prove not only our heaviest cares, but our fiercest crosses!

2. Jeremiah must not go to the house of mourning, upon occasion of the death of any of his neighbours or relations, ver. 5. *Enter thou not into the house of mourning*. It was usual to condole those whose relations were dead, to bemoan them, to cut themselves, and make themselves bald, which it seems, was commonly practised, as an expression of mourning, though forbidden by the law, Deut. xiv. 1. Nay, sometimes they did in a passion of grief *tear themselves for them*, ver. 6, 7. partly in honour of the deceased, thus signifying that they thought there was a great loss of them; and partly in compassion to the surviving relations, to whom the burden will be made the lighter, by their having sharers with them in their grief. They used to *mourn with them*, and so to *comfort them for the dead*, as Job's friends with him, and the Jews with Martha and Mary; and it was a friendly office to give them a cup of consolation to drink, to provide cordials for them, and press them earnestly to drink of them for the support of their spirits; give wine to them that are of heavy heart, for their father or mother, that it may be some comfort to them, to find that though they have lost their parents, yet they have some friends left that have a concern for them. Thus the usage stood; and it was a laudable usage; it is a good work to others, as well as of good use to ourselves, to go to the house of mourning. It seems the prophet Jeremiah had been wont to abound in good offices of this kind, and it well became his character both as a pious man and as a prophet; and one would think it should have made him better beloved among his people, than it should seem he was: But now God bids him not lament the death of his friends as usual: For, 1. His sorrow for the destruction of his country in general, must swallow up his sorrow for particular deaths: His tears must now be turned into another channel, and there is occasion enough for them all. 2. He had little reason to lament those, who died now just before the judgments entered, which he saw at the door; but rather to think them happy, who were seasonably taken away from the evil to come. 3. This was to be a type of what was coming, when there should be such an universal confusion, that all neighbourly, friendly offices should be neglected. Men shall be in deaths so often, and even dying daily, that they shall have no time, no room, no heart, for the ceremonies that used to attend death; the sorrows shall be so ponderous, as not to admit relief; and every one so full of grief for his own troubles, that he shall have no thoughts of his neighbours. All shall be mourners then, and no comforters; everyone will find it enough to bear his own burden: for, ver. 5. *I have taken away my peace from this people*: i. e. put a full period to their prosperity, deprived them of health, and wealth, and quiet, and friends, and every thing wherewith they might comfort themselves and one another. Whatever peace we enjoy, it is God's peace; it is his gift, and if he give quietness, who then can make trouble? But if we make not a good use of his peace, he can and will take it away, and where are we then? Job xxxiv. 29. I will take away my peace, even my loving-kindness and mercies, these shall be shut up and restrained, when are the fresh springs from which all their fresh streams flow, and then farewell all good. Note, Those have cut themselves off from all true peace, that have thrown themselves out of the favour of God: All is gone, when God takes away from us his loving-kindness and his mercies. Then it follows, ver. 6. *Both the great and the small shall die*, even in this land, the land of Canaan, that used to be called the land of the living. God's favour is our life, take away that, and we die, we perish, we all perish.

3. Jeremiah must not go to the house of mirth, no more than to the house of mourning, ver. 8. it had been his custom, and it was innocent enough, when any of his friends made entertainments at their houses, and invited him to them, to go and sit with them, not merely to drink, but to eat and to drink, soberly and cheerfully. But now he must not take that liberty. (1.) Because it was *unseasonable*, and disagreeable to the providences of God that were concerning the land and nation. God called loud to weeping, and mourning, and fasting; he was coming forth against them in his judgments, and it was time for them to humble themselves: And it well became the prophet who gave them the warning, to give them an example of taking the warning, and complying with it; and so to make it appear he did himself believe it. Ministers ought to be examples of self-denial and mortification, and to shew themselves affected with those terrors of the Lord with which they desire to affect others. And it becomes all the sons of Zion, to sympathize with her in her afflictions, and not to be merry when she is perplexed, Amos vi. 6. (2.) Because he must thus shew the people what sad times were coming upon them. His friends wondered he would not meet them, as he used to do, in the house of feasting: But he lets them know, it was to intimate to them, that all their feasting would be at an end shortly, ver. 9. *I will cause to cease the voice of mirth*. You shall have nothing to feast on, nothing to rejoice in, but be surrounded with calamities that shall mar your mirth and cast a damp upon it. God can find ways to tame the most jovial. This shall be done in this place, in Jerusalem that used to be the joyous city, and thought her joys were all secure to her; it shall be done in your eyes, in your sight, to be a vexation to you, who now look so haughty, look so merry; it shall be done in your days, you yourselves shall live to see it. The voice of praise they had made to cease by their iniquities and idolatries, and therefore justly God made to cease among them the voice of mirth and gladness. The voice of God's prophets was not heard, was not heeded among them, and therefore no longer shall the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride, of the songs that used to grace the nuptials, be heard among them. See chap. vii. 34.

10. ¶ And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God? 11. Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; 12. And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me: 13. Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour.

Here, 1. An inquiry made into the reasons, why God would bring those judgments upon them, ver. 10. *When thou shalt shew this people all these*

these words, the words of this curse, they will say unto thee, *Wherefore has the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us?* One would hope there were some among them that asked this question with a humble, penitent heart, desiring to know what was the sin for which God contended with them, that they might *cast it away*, and prevent the judgment; shew us the Jonah that raiseth the storm, and we will throw it over-board: But it seems here to be the language of those who quarrelled at the word of God, and challenged him to shew what they had done, which might deserve so severe a punishment. *What is our iniquity? And what is our sin?* What crime have we ever been guilty of proportionable to such a sentence? Instead of humbling and condemning themselves, they stand upon their own justification, and insinuate, that God did them wrong in pronouncing this evil against them, and that he *laid upon them more than was right*, and they had reason to *enter into judgment with God*, Job xxxiv. 23. Note. It is amazing to see how hardly sinners are brought to justify God, and judge themselves when they are in trouble, and to own the iniquity and the sin that has procured them the trouble.

2. A plain and full answer given to this inquiry. Do they ask the prophet, why, and for what reason God is thus angry with them? He shall not stop their mouths by telling them, they may be sure there is a sufficient reason, the righteous God is never *angry without cause*, without good cause: but he must tell them particularly what is the cause, that they may be convinced and humbled, or at least that God may be *justified*. Let them know then,

1. That God visited upon them the iniquities of their fathers; ver. 11. *Your fathers have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; they shook off divine institutions and grew weary of them, they thought them too plain, too mean, and then they walked after other gods, whose worship was more gay and pompous; and being fond of variety and novelty, they served them and worshipped them; and this was the sin which God had said in the second commandment he would visit upon their children, who kept up these idolatrous usages, because they received them by tradition from their fathers,* 1 Pet. i. 18.

2. That God reckoned with them for their own iniquities, ver. 12. *You have made your fathers' sin your own, and are become obnoxious to the punishment which in their days was deferred, for you have done worse than your fathers.* If they had made a good use of their fathers' reprieve, and had been led by the patience of God to repentance, they should have feared the better for it, and the judgment should have been prevented, the reprieve turned into a national pardon: but making an ill use of it, and being hardened by it in their sins, they feared the worse for it, and the reprieve being expired, an addition was made to the sentence, and it was executed with the more severity. They were more impudent and obstinate in sin than their fathers, *walked every one after the imagination of his heart*, made that their guide and rule, and were resolved to follow that, on purpose that they might not hearken to God and his prophets. They designedly suffer their own lusts and passions to be noisy, that they might drown the voice of their consciences. No wonder then, that God has taken up this resolution concerning them, ver. 13. *I will cast you out of this land, this land of light, this valley of vision, since you will not hearken to me you shall not hear me, you shall be hurried away, not into a neighbouring country which you have formerly had some acquaintance and correspondence with, but into a far country, a land that ye know not, neither you nor your fathers; in which you have no interest, nor can expect to meet with any comfortable society, to be an ally to your misery.* Justly were they banished into a *strange land* who doated upon *strange gods*, which neither they nor their fathers knew, Deut. xxxii. 17. Two things would make their case there very miserable, and both of them relate to the soul, the better part; the greatest calamities of their captivity were those which affected that, and debarred that from its bliss. (1.) It is the happiness of the soul to be employed in the service of God, but *there shall ye serve other gods day and night*, i.e. you shall be in continual temptation to serve them, and perhaps compelled to do it by your cruel task-masters; and when you are forced to worship idols, you will be as *sick* of it, as ever you were *fond* of it when it was forbidden you by your godly kings. See how God often makes men's sin their punishment, and *fills the backslider in heart with his own ways*. You shall have no public worship at all, but the worship of idols, and then you will think with regret how you slighted the worship of the true God. (2.) It is the happiness of the soul to have some tokens of the loving-kindness of God, but you shall go to a *strange land, where I will not shew you favour*. If they had had God's favour, that would have made even the land of their captivity a pleasant land: but if they lie under his wrath, the yoke of their oppression will be intolerable to them.

14. ¶ Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, *The LORD liveth*, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 15. But, *The LORD liveth*, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. 16. ¶ Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. 17. For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes. 18. And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcases of their detestable and abominable things. 19. O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. 20. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods? 21. Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might: and they shall know that my name is the LORD.

There is a mixture of *mercy* and *judgment* in these verses, and it is hard to know to which to apply some of the passages here, they are so interwoven: and some seem to look as far forward as the times of the gospel.

1. God will certainly execute judgment upon them for their idolatries: Let them expect it, for the decree is gone forth.

(1.) God sees all their sins, though they commit them never so secretly, and palliate them never so artfully, ver. 17. *Mine eyes are upon all their ways.* They have not their eye upon God, have no regard to him, stand in no awe of him, but he has his eye upon them, neither they nor their sins are *hid from his face, from his eyes*. Note. None of the sins of sinners either can be concealed from God, or shall be overlooked by him, Prov. v. 21. Job xxxiv. 21. Psalm xc. 8.

(2.) God is highly displeased, particularly at their idolatries, ver. 18. As his omniscience convicts them, so his justice condemns them, *I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double*; not double to what it deserves, but double to what they expect, and to what I have done formerly. Or I will recompense it *abundantly*, they shall now pay for their long reprieve, and the divine patience they have abused. The sin for which God has a controversy with them, is their having *defiled God's land* with their idolatries, and not only alienated that which he was *intitled* to as his inheritance, but polluted that which he dwelt in with delight as his *inheritance*, and made it offensive to him *with the carcases of their detestable things*, i.e. the gods themselves which they worshipped, the images of which, though they were of gold and silver, were as loathsome to God, as the sinking carcases of men or beasts are to us; idols are *carcases of detestable things*, God hates them, and so should we. Or the sacrifices which they offered to these idols, with which *the land was filled*; for they had *high places* in all the coasts and corners of it. This was the sin which above any other incensed God against them.

(3.) He will find out and raise up instruments of his wrath, that shall *cast them out of their land*, according to the sentence past upon them, ver. 16. *I will send for many fishers, and many hunters.* The Chaldean army, that shall have many ways of ensnaring and destroying them, by *fraud* as fishers, by *force* as hunters; they shall find them out wherever they are, and shall chase and closely pursue them to their ruin; shall *discover* them wherever they are hid in *hills or mountains, or holes of the rocks*, and shall drive them out. God has various means of prosecuting a people with his judgments, that avoid the convictions of his word: He has men at command fit for his purpose, he has them within call, and can *send for them* when he pleaseth.

(4.) Their bondage in Babylon shall be sorer and much more grievous than that in Egypt, their task-masters more cruel, and their lives made more bitter. This is implied in the promise, ver. 14, 15. That their deliverance out of Babylon, shall be more illustrious in itself, and more welcome to them, than that out of Egypt. Their slavery in Egypt came upon them gradually, and almost insensibly; that in Babylon came upon them at once, and with all the aggravating circumstances of terror. In Egypt they had a Goshen of their own, but none such in Babylon. In Egypt they were used as servants that were useful. In Babylon, as captives that had been hateful.

(5.) They shall be warned, and God shall be glorified by these judgments brought upon them. These judgments have a voice and speak aloud, (1.) *Instruction to them*, when God chastens them he teaches them. By this rod God expostulates with them, ver. 20. *Shall a man make gods to himself?* Will any man be so perfectly void of all reason and consideration, as to think that a god of his own making can stand him in any stead? Will you ever again be such fools as you have been, to make to yourselves gods, which are no gods, when you have a God whom you may call *your own*, who made you, and is himself the true and living God? (2.) *Honour to God*, for he will be known by the judgments which he executeth: He will *first* recompense their iniquity, ver. 18. and then he will *this once*, ver. 21. *this once* for all, not by many interruptions of their peace, but this one desolation and destruction of it; or *this once* and no more, *I will cause them to know my hand*, the length and weight of my punishing hand, how far it can reach, and how deep it can wound. And they shall know that *my name is Jehovah*, a God with whom there is no contending, that gives being to threatenings, and puts life into them as well as promises.

2. Yet he hath mercy in store for them, intimations of which come in here for the encouragement of the prophet himself, and of those few among them that trembled at God's word. It was said with an air of severity, ver. 13. that God would banish them into a strange land, but that thereby they might not be driven to despair, presently there follow words of comfort:

1. *The days will come*, the joyful days, when the same hand that dispersed them shall *gather them again*, ver. 14, 15. They are *cast out*, but they are not *cast off*; they are not *cast away*; they shall be brought up *from the land of the north*, the land of their captivity, where they are held with a strong hand, and from *all the lands whither they are driven*, and seemed to be lost and buried in the crowd; *may, I will bring them again into their own land*, and settle them there. As the foregoing threatenings agreed with what was written in the law, so doth this promise, Lev. xxvi. 44. *Yet will I not cast thee away*, Deut. xxx. 4. *Thence will the Lord thy God gather thee.* And the following words, ver. 16. may be understood as a promise, God will send for *fishers and hunters*, the Medes and Persians, that shall find them out in the countries where they are scattered, and send them back to their own land; or, Zerubbabel and others of their own nation who should *fish* them out, and *hunt* after them to persuade them to return; or whatever instruments the Spirit of God made use of to *stir up their spirits to go up*, which at first they were backward to. They began to nestle in Babylon, but as *an eagle stirs up her nest, and flutters over her young*, so God did by them, Zech. ii. 7.

2. Their deliverance out of Babylon should, upon some accounts, be more illustrious and memorable than their deliverance out of Egypt was. Both were the Lord's doing and marvellous in their eyes, both were proofs that *the Lord liveth*, and were to be kept in everlasting remembrance to his honour, as the *living God*; but the fresh mercy shall be so surprising, so welcome, that it shall even abolish the memory of the former. Not but that new mercies should put us in mind of old ones, and gives us occasion to renew our thanksgivings for them; yet because we are tempted to think, that the former days were better than these, and to ask, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* as if God's arm were *waxed short*; and to cry up the age of miracles above the latter ages, when mercies are wrought in a way of common providence; therefore we are allowed here *comparatively* to forget the bringing of Israel out of Egypt as a deliverance outdone by that out of Babylon. That was done *by might and power*, this *by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, Zech. iv. 6. In this there was more of *pardoning mercy* appearing than that, which is the most glorious branch of divine mercy; for their captivity in Babylon had more in it of the punishment of sin, than their bondage in Egypt; and therefore that which comforts Zion in her deliverance out of Babylon is this, that *her iniquity is pardoned*, Isa.

xl. 2. Note, God glories himself, and we must glorify him in those mercies that have no miracles in them, as well as in those that have. And though the favours of God to our fathers must not be forgotten, yet those to ourselves in our own day we must especially give thanks for.

3. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be accompanied with a blessed reformation, and they shall return effectually cured of their inclination to idolatry, which will complete their deliverance, and make it a mercy indeed. They had defiled their own land with their detestable things, ver. 18. but when they have smelted for so doing, they shall come and humble themselves before God, ver. 19, 20, 21.

(1.) They shall be brought to acknowledge that their God only is God indeed, for he is a God at need. *My strength* to support and comfort me, *my fortress* to protect and shelter me, and *my refuge* to whom I may flee in the day of affliction. Note, Need drives many to God, who had set themselves at a distance from him. Those that slighted him in the day of their prosperity will be glad to flee to him in the day of their affliction.

(2.) They shall be quickened to return to him by the conversion of the Gentiles; *the Gentiles shall come to thee from the ends of the earth*, and therefore shall not we come? Or the Jews who had by their idolatries made themselves as Gentiles (so I rather understand it) shall come to thee, by repentance and reformation, shall return to their duty and allegiance, even from the ends of the earth, from all the countries whither they were driven. The prophet comforts himself with the hopes of this, and in a transport of joy returns to God the notice he had given him of it, *O Lord, my strength and my fortress*. I am now easy, since thou hast given me a prospect of multitudes that shall come to thee from the ends of the earth, both of Jewish converts and of Gentile proselytes. Note, Those that are brought to God themselves, cannot but rejoice greatly to see others coming to him, coming back to him.

(3.) They shall acknowledge the folly of their ancestors, which it becomes them to do, when they were smarting for the sins of their ancestors. *Surely our fathers have inherited*, not the satisfaction they promised themselves and their children, but lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit; we are now sensible, that our fathers were cheated in their idolatrous worship, it did not prove what it promised, and therefore, what have we to do any more with it? Note, It were well if the disappointment which some have met with in the service of sin, and the pernicious consequences of it to them, might prevail to deter others from treading in their steps.

(4.) They shall reason themselves out of their idolatry: and that reformation is likely to be sincere and durable, which results from a rational conviction of the gross absurdity there is in sin. They shall argue thus with themselves (and it is well argued) ver. 20. *Should a man be such a fool*, be so perfectly void of the reason of a man, as to make gods to himself, the creatures of his own fancy, the work of his own hands, when they are really no gods? Can a man be so besotted, so perfectly lost to human understanding, as to expect any divine blessing or favour from that which pretends to no divinity but what is first received from him?

(5.) They shall herein give honour to God, and make it to appear, that they know both his hand in his providence, and his name in his word, and they are brought to know his name, by what they are made to know of his hand, ver. 21. *This once*; now at length they shall be made to know that which they would not be brought to know, by all the pains the prophets took with them. Note, So stupid are we, that nothing less than the mighty hand of divine grace known experimentally, can make us know rightly the name of God as it is revealed to us.

4. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be a type and figure of the great salvation to be wrought out by the Messiah, who shall gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. And this is that which so far outshines the deliverance out of Egypt, as even to eclipse the lustre of it, and make it even to be forgotten. To this some apply that of the many fishers and hunters, the preachers of the gospel, who were fishers of men, to inclose souls with the gospel net; to find them out in every mountain and hill, and secure them for Christ. Then the Gentiles came to God, some from the ends of the earth, and turned to the worship of him from the service of dumb idols.

C H A P. XVII.

In this chapter. (1.) God convicts the Jews of the sin of idolatry by the notorious evidence of the fact, and condemns them to captivity for it, ver. 1—4. (2.) He shews them the folly of all their carnal confidences which should stand them in no stead, when God's time was to contend with them; and that this was one of the sins upon which his controversy with them was grounded, ver. 5—11. (3.) The prophet makes his appeal and address to God, upon occasion of the malice of his enemies against him, committing himself to the divine protection, and begging of God to appear for him, ver. 12—18. (4.) God by the prophet warns the people to keep holy the sabbath day, assuring them that if they did, it should be the lengthening out of their tranquillity; but if not, God would by some desolating judgment assert the honour of his sabbaths, ver. 19—27.

1. **T**HE sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars; 2. Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills. 3. O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders. 4. And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever.

The people had asked, chap. xvi. 10. *What is our iniquity? and what is our sin?* As if they could not be charged with any thing worth speaking of, for which God should enter into judgment with them; their challenge was answered there, but here we have a further reply to it; in which,

1. The indictment is fully proved upon the prisoners, both the fact and the fault; their sin is too plain to be denied, and too bad to be excused, and they have nothing to plead either in extenuation of the crime, or in arrest and mitigation of the judgment.

(1.) They cannot plead *not guilty*, for their sins are upon record in the book of God's omniscience and their own conscience; nay, and they are obvious to the eye and observation of the world, ver. 1, 2. It is written before God in the most legible and indelible characters, and sealed among his treasures, never to be forgotten, Deut. xxxii. 34. It is written there with a

pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: what is so written will not be worn out by time, but is, as Job speaks, *graven in the rock for ever*. Note, The sin of sinners is never forgotten, till it is forgiven. It is ever before God, till by repentance it comes to be ever before us. It is graven upon the table of their heart, their own consciences witness against them, and are instead of a thousand witnesses. What is graven on the heart, though it may be covered and closed up for a time, yet being graven, it cannot be mazed out: but will be produced in evidence, when the books shall be opened. Nay, we need not appeal to the tables of the heart, perhaps they will not own the convictions of their consciences. We need go no further for proof of the charge, than the horns of their altars, on which the blood of their idolatrous sacrifices are sprinkled, and perhaps the names of the idols, to whose honour they were erected, were inscribed. Their neighbours will witness against them, and all the creatures they have abused, by using them in the service of their lusts: To complete the evidence, their own children shall be witnesses against them; they will tell truth, when their fathers dissemble and prevaricate; they remember the altars, and the groves to which their parents took them when they were little, ver. 2. It appears they were full of them, and acquainted with them betimes, they talk of them so frequently, so familiarly, and with so much delight.

(2.) They cannot plead that they repent, or are come to a better mind; no, as the guilt of their sin is undeniable, so their inclination to sin is invincible and incurable. In this sense many understand, ver. 1, 2. Their sin is deeply engraven as with a pen of iron in the tables of their hearts, they have a rooted affection to it, it is woven into their very nature; their sin is dear to them as that is of which we say, it is engraven on our hearts. The bias of their minds is still as strong as ever towards their idols, and they are not wrought upon either by the word or rod of God to forget them and abate their affection to them. It is written upon the horns of their altars, for they have given up their names to their idols, and resolve to abide by what they have done; they have bound themselves as with cords to the horns of their altars. And ver. 2. may be read fully to this sense, as they remember their children, so remember they their altars and their groves, they are as fond of them, and take as much pleasure in them as men do of their own children, and are as loth to part with them; they will live and die with their idols, and can no more forget them than a woman can forget her sucking child.

2. The indictment being thus fully proved, the judgment is affirmed, and the sentence ratified, ver. 3, 4. Forasmuch as they are thus wedded to their sins, and will not part with them.

1. They shall be made to part with their treasures, and those shall be given into the hands of strangers; Jerusalem is God's mountain in the field, it was built on a hill in the midst of a plain; all the treasures of that wealthy city will God give to the spoil. Or, *My mountains with thy fields, thy wealth, and all thy treasures will I expose to spoil*; both the products of the country, and the stores of the city shall be seized by the Chaldeans. Justly are men stripped of that which they have served their idols with, and have made the food and fuel of their lusts. *My mountain* (so the whole land was, Psal. lxxviii. 54. Deut. xi. 11.) you have turned into your high places for sin, have worshipped your idols upon the high hills, ver. 2. and now they shall be given for a spoil in all your borders. What we make for a sin, God will make for a spoil; for what comfort can we expect in that wherewith God is dishonoured?

2. They shall be made to part with their inheritance, with their real estates as well as personal, and shall be carried captives into a strange land, ver. 4. *Thou, even thyself, or thou thyself, and those that are in thee*, all the inhabitants shall discontinue from thy heritage that I gave thee. God owns it was their heritage, and he gave it them, they had an unquestionable title to it, which was an aggravation of their folly in throwing themselves out of the possession of it. It is through thyself (so some read it) through thine own default that thou art dispossessed. *Thou shalt discontinue, or intermit the occupation of thy land*. The law appointed them to let their land rest (it is the word here used) one year in seven, Exod. xxiii. 11. They did not observe that law, and now God would compel them to let it rest: the land shall enjoy her sabbaths, Lev. xxvi. 34. and yet it shall be no rest to them, they shall serve their enemies in a land they know not. Observe, (1.) Sin works a discontinuance of our comforts, and deprives us of the enjoyment of that which God has given us. Yet, (2.) A discontinuance of the possession is not a defeatance of the right, but it is intimated, that upon their repentance they shall recover possession again. For the present, ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which burns so hot, that it seems as if it would burn for ever; and so it will unless you repent, for it is the anger of an everlasting God fastening upon immortal souls; and who knows the power of that anger?

5. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. 6. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited. 7. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. 8. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. 9. ¶ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? 10. I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. 11. As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

It is excellent doctrine that is preached in these verses, and of general concern and use to us all, and it doth not appear to have any particular reference to the present state of Judah and Jerusalem; the prophet's sermons were not all prophetic, but some of them practical; yet this discourse, which probably we have here only the heads of, would be of singular use to them by way of caution, not to misplace their confidence in the day of their distress. Let us all learn what we are taught here.

1. Concerning the disappointment and vexation they will certainly meet with, that depend upon creatures for success and relief when they are in trouble, ver. 5, 6. *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man*; God pronounceth him cursed for the affront he thereby puts upon him; or *cursed*, that is, miserable is the man that doth so, for he leans upon a broken reed, which

which will not only fail him, but will *run into his hand and pierce it*. Observe, (1.) The sin here condemned, it is *trusting in man*, putting that confidence in the wisdom and power, the kindness and faithfulness of men, which should be placed in those attributes of God only. Making our applications to men, and raising our expectations from them as principal agents, whereas they are but instruments in the hand of providence: it is *making flesh the arm* we stay upon, the arm we work with, and with which we hope to work our point; the arm under which we shelter ourselves and on which we depend for protection. God is his people's *arm*, Isa. xxxiii. 2. We must not think any creature to be that to us, which God has undertaken to be. Man is called *flesh*, to shew the folly of those that make them their confidence; he is *flesh*, i. e. weak and feeble, as *flesh* without bones or sinews, that has no strength at all in it; he is unactive as *flesh* without spirit, which is a dead thing. He is mortal and dying, as *flesh* which soon putrifies and corrupts, and is continually wasting. Nay, he is false and sinful, and has lost his integrity, so his being *flesh* signifies, Gen. vi. 3. (2.) The great malignity there is in this sin; it is the *departure of the evil heart of unbelief from the living God*. They that trust in man, perhaps draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, they call him their hope, and say they trust in him; but really *their heart departeth from him*: they distrust him, despise him, and decline a correspondence with him. Clearing to the cistern is leaving the fountain, and is refuted accordingly. (3.) The fatal consequences of this sin. He that puts a confidence in man, puts a cheat upon himself; for, ver. 6. *He shall be like the heath in the desert*, a sorry shrub, the product of barren ground, sapless, and useless, and worthless; his comforts shall all fail him, and his hopes be blasted: he shall wither, be dejected in himself, and trampled on by all about him. *When good comes he shall not see it*, he shall not share in it; when the times mend, they shall not mend with him, but he shall *inhabit the parched places in the wilderness*, i. e. his expectations shall be continually frustrated; when others have a harvest, he shall have none. They that trust in their own righteousness and strength, and think they can do well enough without the merit and grace of Christ, thus *make flesh their arm*, and their souls cannot prosper in graces or comforts; they can neither *produce the fruits* of acceptable services to God, nor *reap the fruits* of saving blessings from him; they *dwelt in a dry land*.

2. Concerning the abundant satisfaction which they have and will have that make God their confidence, that live by faith in his providence and promise, that *refer themselves* to him and his conduct at all times, and *repose themselves* in him and his love in the most unquiet times, ver. 7, 8. Observe, (1.) The duty required of us, to *trust in the Lord*, to do our duty to him, and then depend upon him to bear us out in doing it; when creatures and second causes either deceive or threaten us, either are false to us or fierce against us, to commit ourselves to God as all-sufficient, both to make up the want of those that fail us, and to protect us from those that set upon us. It is to *make the Lord our hope*, his favour the good we *hope for*, and his power the strength we *hope in*. (2.) The comfort that attends the doing of this duty. He that doeth so shall be *as a tree planted by the waters*, a choice tree, about which great care has been taken to set it in the best soil, so far from being like *the heath in the wilderness*; like a tree that *spreads out her roots*, and thereby is firmly fixed, spreads them out *by the rivers*, whence it draws abundance of sap; which notes both the establishment and the comfort which they have that make God their hope; they are easy, they are pleasant, and enjoy a continual security and serenity of mind; a tree thus planted, thus watered, shall *not die when heat comes*, i. e. shall not sustain any damage by the most scorching heats of summer; it is so well moistened from its roots, that it shall be sufficiently guarded against drought. Those that make God their hope, (1.) They shall *flourish* in credit and comfort; like a tree that is *always green*, whose leaf doth not wither; they shall be *cheerful* to themselves, and *beautiful* in the eyes of others. Those who thus *give honour* to God by *giving him credit*, God will *put honour* upon them, and make them the ornament and delight of the places where they live, as green trees are. (2.) They will be *fixed* in an inward peace and satisfaction; *shall not be careful in a year of drought*, when there is want of rain, for as it has *seed in itself*, so it has its *moisture*. Those that make God their hope, have enough in him to make up the want of all their creature-comforts. We need not be *solicitous* about the breaking of a cistern, as long as we have the fountain. (3.) They shall be fruitful in holiness, and in all good works. They that trust in God, and by faith derive strength and grace from him, *shall not cease from yielding fruit*, they shall still be enabled to do that which will redound to the glory of God, the benefit of others, and their own account.

3. Concerning the sinfulness of man's heart, and the divine inspection it is always under, ver. 9, 10. It is folly to trust in man, for he is not only frail, but false and deceitful. We are apt to think we trust in God, and are entitled to the blessings here promised to them that do so; but this is a thing about which our hearts deceive us as much as any thing; we think we trust in God when really we do not, as appears by this that our hopes and fears *rise or fall*, according as second causes *smile or frown*. But it is true in general,

(1.) There is that wickedness in our hearts, which we ourselves are not aware of, and do not suspect to be there; nay, it is a common mistake among the children of men to think themselves, their own hearts at least, a great deal better than really they are. *The heart*, i. e. the conscience of man, in his corrupt and fallen state, is *deceitful above all things*, it is subtle and false, it is apt to *supplant*, so the word properly signifies, it is that from which Jacob had his name a *supplanter*. It calls evil good, and good evil; puts false colours upon things, and cries peace to those to whom peace doth not belong. When men say in their hearts, i. e. suffer their hearts to whisper to them, that either there is no God, or he doth not see, or he will not requite, or they shall have peace, though they go on; in these and a thousand the like suggestions, the heart is *deceitful*: it cheats men into their own ruin; and this will be the aggravation of it, that they are self-deceivers, self-destroyers. Herein the heart is *desperately wicked*; it is *deceitful*, it is *desperate*. The case is bad indeed, and in a manner deplorable and past relief, if the conscience, which should rectify the errors of the other faculties, is itself a mother of falsehood, and a ringleader in the delusion. What will become of a man, if that in him which should be the *candle of the Lord* give a false light? if God's deputy in the soul, that is intrusted to support his interests, betrays them? Such is the deceitfulness of the heart, that we may truly say, *Who can know it?* who can describe how bad the heart is? We cannot know our own hearts, nor what they will do in an hour of temptation; Hezekiah did not, Peter did not; not what corrupt dispositions there are in them, nor in how many things they have turned aside; who can understand his errors? Much less can we know the hearts of others, or have any dependence upon them. But,

(2.) Whatever wickedness there is in the heart, God sees it and knows it, is perfectly acquainted with it, and apprized of it; *I the Lord search the heart*. This is true of all that is in the heart, all the *thoughts* of it, the *quickest*, and those that are most carelessly overlooked by ourselves: all the *intentions* of it, the *closest*, and those that are most artfully disguised and industriously concealed from others. Men may be imposed upon, but God cannot.

He not only *searcheth the heart* with a piercing eye, but he *tries the reins*, to pass a judgment upon what he discovers, to give every thing its due weight. He tries as the gold is tried, whether it be standard or no; as the prisoner is tried, whether he be guilty or no. And this judgment he makes of the heart, is in order to his passing judgment upon the man; it is to *give to every man according to his ways*, according to the desert, and the *tendency* of them; life to those that walked in the ways of life, and death to those that perished in the paths of the destroyer; and according to the *fruits of his doings*, the effect and influence his doings have had upon others; or, according to what is settled by the word of God to be the fruit of men's doings, blessings to the obedient, and curses to the disobedient. Note, Therefore God is *judge himself*, and he *alone*, because he, and none but he, knows the hearts of the children of men. It is true especially of all the *deceitfulness* and *wickedness* of the heart, all its corrupt devices, desires, and designs, God observes and discerns them; and (which is more than any man can do) he judgeth of the overt act by the heart. Note, God knows more evil by us than we do by ourselves; which is a good reason why we should not flatter ourselves, but always stand in awe of the judgment of God.

4. Concerning the curse that attends wealth unjustly gotten: fraud and violence had been reigning, crying sin in Judah and Jerusalem; now the prophet would have those who had been guilty of these sins, and were now stripped of all they had, to read their sin in their punishment, ver. 11. *He that gets riches, and not by right*, though he may make them his hope, he shall never have joy of them. Observe, It is possible that those who use unlawful means to get wealth, may succeed therein, and prosper for a time, and it is a temptation to many to defraud and oppress their neighbours when there is money to be got by it. He that has got *treasures by vanity* and a *lying tongue*, may hug himself in his success, and say, *I am rich*; nay, and *I am innocent too*, Hos. xii. 8. but *he shall leave them in the midst of his days*; they shall be taken from him, or he from them; God shall cut him off with some surprising stroke then, when he said, *Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years*. Luke xii. 19, 20. He shall leave them to his knows not whom, and not be able to take any of his riches away with him. It intimates, what a great vexation it is to a worldly man at death, that he must leave his riches behind him; and *justly* may it be a terror to those, that got them *unjustly*; for though the wealth will not follow them to another world, the guilt will, and the torment of an everlasting *Son, remember*, Luke xvi. 25. Thus at his end he shall be a fool, a Nabal, whose wealth did him no good, which he had so fondly hoarded, when his heart became dead as a stone. He was a fool all along; sometimes perhaps his own conscience told him so, but at his end he will appear to be so. Those are fools indeed, that are fools in their latter end; and so multitudes will prove, who were cried up as *wise men*, that did *well for themselves*. Psalm xlix. 13—18. They that get grace will be *wise in their latter end*, will have the comfort of it in death, and the benefit of it to eternity, Prov. xix. 20. but they that place their happiness in the wealth of the world, and right or wrong *will be rich*, will rue the folly of it, when it is too late to rectify the fatal mistake. This is like the *partridge that sits on eggs and hatcheth them not*; but either they are broke, as *Job xxxix. 15*, or stolen, as *Isa. x. 14*, or they become addle; some sort of fowl there was well known among the Jews, whose case this commonly was: The rich man takes a great deal of pains to get an estate together, and his *bravado* upon it, but never has any comfort or satisfaction in it; his projects to enrich himself by sinful courses miscarry, and come to nothing. Let us therefore be *wise in time*; what we get, to get it *honestly*; and what we have, to use it *charitably*; that we may lay up in store a good foundation, and be *wise for eternity*.

12. ¶ A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. 13. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written on the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters. 14. Heal me O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise. 15. ¶ Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the LORD? let it come now. 16. As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee. 17. Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil. 18. Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

Here, as often before, we have the prophet retired for private meditation, and alone with God. Those ministers that would have comfort in their work, must be much so. In this converse here with God and his own heart, he takes the liberty, which devout souls sometimes use in their soliloquies, to pass from one thing to another, without tying themselves too strictly to the laws of method and coherence.

1. He acknowledgeth the great favour of God to his people, in setting up a revealed religion among them, and dignifying them with divine institutions, ver. 12. *A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary*: the temple at Jerusalem, where God manifested his special presence, where the lively oracles were lodged, where the people paid their homage to their sovereign, and whither they fled for refuge in distress, was the *place of their sanctuary*. That was a *glorious high throne*, it was a throne of holiness, that made it truly *glorious*; it was God's throne, that made it truly *high*. Jerusalem is called the *city of the great King*, not only Israel's King, but the king of the whole earth, so that it might justly be deemed the metropolis, or royal city of the world. It was *from the beginning* so, from the first projecting of it by David, and building of it by Solomon, 2 Chron. ii. 9. It was the honour of Israel, that God set up such a glorious throne among them. *As the glorious and high throne*, viz. that is in heaven, is the *place of our sanctuary*, so some read it. Note, all good men have a high value and veneration for the ordinances of God, and reckon the *place of the sanctuary* a glorious high throne. Jeremiah mentions this here, either as a plea with God for mercy to their land, in honour of the *throne of his glory*, chap. xiv. 21. or as an aggravation of the sin of his people, in forsaking God, though his throne was among them, and so profaning his crown and the *place of his sanctuary*.

2. He acknowledgeth the righteousness of God, in abandoning those to ruin that forsake him, and revolted from their allegiance to him, ver. 13. He speaks it to God, as subscribing both to the certainty and the equity of it;

it: O Lord, the hope of those in Israel that adhere to thee, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed. They must of necessity be so, for they forsake thee for lying vanities, which will deceive them and make them ashamed; they will be ashamed, for they shame themselves: they will justly be put to shame, for they have forsaken him, who alone can keep them in continency, when troubles come. Let them be ashamed, to some read it; and so it is a pious imprecation of the wrath of God upon them, or of petition for his grace to make them penitently ashamed. They that depart from me, i. e. from the word of God which I have preached, they do in effect depart from God: as those that return to God, are said to return to the prophet, chap. xv. 19. They that depart from thee, to some read it, they shall be written in the earth: they shall soon be blotted out, as that is which is written in the dust: they shall be trampled upon, and exposed to contempt; they belong to the earth, and shall be numbered among earthly people that lay up their treasures on the earth, and whose names are not written in heaven. And they deserve to be thus written with the fools in Israel, that their folly may be made manifest unto all, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters, i. e. spring-waters, and that for broken cisterns. Note, God is to all that are his a fountain of living waters. There is a fulness of comfort in him; an ever-flowing, ever-flowing fulness, like that of a fountain: it is always fresh, and clear, and clean, like spring-water, while the pleasure of sin are put like waters. They are free to it, it is not a fountain sealed: they deserve therefore to be condemned as Adam to red earth, to which by the corruption of their nature they are allied, because they have forsaken the garden of the Lord, which is so well watered. They that depart from God, are written in the earth.

3. He prays to God for healing, saving mercy for himself. If the case of those be so miserable that depart from God, let me always draw nigh to him, Psalm lxxiii. 27, 29, and in order to that, Lord, heal me, and save me, ver. 14. Heal my backslidings, my bent to backside, and save me from being carried away by the strength of the stream to forsake thee. He was wounded in spirit with grief upon many accounts; Lord, heal me with thy comforts, and make me easy. He was continually exposed to the malice of unreasonable men: Lord, save me from them, and let me not fall into their wicked hands. Heal me, i. e. sanctify me by thy grace: save me, i. e. bring me to thy glory. All that shall be saved hereafter, are sanctified now: unless the disease of sin be purged out, the soul cannot live. To enforce this petition, he pleads, (1.) The firm belief he had of God's power: Heal thou me, and then I shall be healed; the cure will certainly be wrought if thou undertake it: it will be a thorough cure, and not a palliative one. Those that come to God to be healed, ought to be abundantly satisfied in the all-sufficiency of their physician. Save me, and then I shall certainly be saved, be my dangers and enemies never so threatening. If God hold us up, we shall live: if he protects us, we shall be safe. (2.) The sincere regard he had to God's glory, for thou art my praise, and for that reason I desire to be healed and saved, that I may live and praise thee, Psalm cix. 175. Thou art he whom I praise, and the praise due to thee I never gave to another. Thou art he whom I glory in, and boast of, for on thee do I depend. Thou art he that furnishest me with continual matter for praise, and I have given thee the praise of the favours already bestowed upon me. Thou shalt be my praise, so some read it; heal me, and save me, and thou shalt have the glory of it; My praise shall be continually of thee, Psalm lxi. 6 - lxxix. 13.

4. He complains of the falseness and dangerous insinuation of the people to whom he preached. It greatly troubled him, and he shews before God this trouble: as the serpent that had flights put upon him by the guests he was sent to invite, came and showed his Lord these things. He had faithfully delivered God's message to them, and what answer has he to return to him that sent him? Why, ver. 15. Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now, Isa. v. 19. They bantered the prophet, and made a jest of that which he delivered with the gravest seriousness. (1.) They denied the truth of what he said: If that be the word of the Lord which thou speakest to us, where is it? Why is it not fulfilled? Thus the patience of God was indignantly abused, as a ground to question his veracity. (2.) They despised the terror of what he said: let God Almighty do his worst, let all he has said come to pass, we shall do well enough: the lion is not so fierce as he is painted. Amos v. 18. Lord, to what purpose is it to speak to men that will neither believe nor fear?

5. He appeals to God concerning his faithful discharge of the office to which he was called, ver. 16. The people did all they could to make him weary of his work, to exasperate him, and make him uneasy, and to tempt him to pervert and alter his message for fear of displeasing them: but, Lord, saith he, thou knowest I have not yielded to them. (1.) He kept constant to his work. His office instead of being his credit and protection, exposed him to reproach, contempt, and injury; and yet saith he, I have not hastened from being a pastor after thee: I have not over-run my work, nor fled for a discharge or a quietus. Prophets were pastors to the people, to feed them with the good word of God; but they were to be pastors after God, and all ministers must be so, according to his heart, chap. iii. 15. to follow him, and the directions and instructions he gives; such a pastor Jeremiah was; and though he met with as much difficulty and discouragement as ever any man did, yet he did not fly off as Jonah did, nor desire to be excused from going any more on God's errands. Note, Those that are employed from God, though their success answer not their expectation, yet they must not therefore throw up their commission but continue to follow God, though the storm be in their faces. (2.) He kept up his affection to the people. Though they were very abusive to him, he was compassionate to them; I have not desired the woeful day. The day of the accomplishment of his prophecies would be a woeful day indeed to Jerusalem, and therefore he deprecated it and wished it might never come: though as to himself, it would be the avenging of him upon his persecutors, and the proving of him a true prophet, which they had questioned, ver. 15. and upon those accounts he might be tempted to desire it. Note, God doth not, and therefore ministers must not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn and live. Though we warn of the woeful day, we must not wish for it, but rather weep because of it, as Jeremiah did. (3.) He kept close to his instructions; though he might have carried favour to the people, or at least have avoided their displeasure, if he had not been so sharp in his reproofs and severe in his threatenings, yet he would deliver his message faithfully, and that he had done so was a comfort to him; Lord, thou knowest that which came out of my lips was right before thee, i. e. it exactly agreed with what I had received from thee, and therefore thou art reflected upon in their quarrelling with me. Note, If what we say and do be right before God, we may easily despise the reproaches and censures of men: It is a small thing to be judged of their judgment.

6. He humbly begs of God, that he would own him and protect him, and carry him on cheerfully in that work to which God had so plainly called him, and he had sincerely devoted himself. Two things he here desires:

1. That he might have comfort in serving the God that sent him, ver. 17. Be not thou a terror to me. Surely more is implied than expressed; he thou a comfort to me, and let thy favour rejoice my heart and encourage me, Vol. II. No. CXXIV.

When my enemies do all they can to terrify me, and either to drive me from my work, or make me drive on heavily in it. Note, The best have fear in them which might justly make God a terror to them, as he was for some time to Job, chap. vi. 3. to Ahab, Psalm lxxvii. 3. to Heman, Psalm lxxviii. 15. And this is that which good men, knowing the terrors of the Lord, dread and deprecate more than any thing: nay, whatever frightful accidents may befall them, or how formidable forever their enemies may appear to them, they can do well enough, so long as God is not a terror to them. He pleads, Thou art my hope: and then nothing else is my fear, no, not in the day of evil, when it is most threatening, most pressing. My dependence is upon thee, and therefore be not a terror to me. Note, Those that by faith make God their confidence, shall have him for their comfort in the worst of times, if it be not their own fault: if we make him our trust, we shall not find him our terror.

2. That he might have courage in dealing with the people to whom he was sent, ver. 18. They persecuted him, who should have entertained and encouraged him: Lord, saith he, let them be confounded, i. e. let them be over-powered by the convictions of the word, and made ashamed of their obstinacy, or else let the judgments threatened be at length executed upon them; but let not me be confounded, let not me be terrified by their menaces, so as to betray by truth. Note, God's ministers have work to do, which they need not be either ashamed of or afraid to go on in, but they do need to be helped by the divine grace to go on in it without shame or fear. Jeremiah had not desired the woeful day upon his country in general; but as to his persecutors, in a just and holy indignation at their malice, he prays, Bring upon them the day of evil, in hopes the bringing it upon them might prevent the bringing it upon the country: if they were taken away the people would be better, therefore destroy them with a double destruction, i. e. let them be utterly destroyed, root and branch; and let the prospect of that destruction be their present confusion. This the prophet prays, not at all that he might be avenged, nor so much that he might be eased, but that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executeth.

19. ¶ Thus said the LORD unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people where-by the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; 20. And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: 21. Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath-day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; 22. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers, 23. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. 24. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath-day, but hallow the sabbath-day, to do no work therein; 25. Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever. 26. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, and meat-offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the LORD. 27. But if you will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath-day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

These verses are a sermon concerning sabbath-sanctification; it is a word which the prophet received from the Lord, and was ordered to deliver in the most solemn, public manner to the people; for they were sent not only to reprove sin, and to press obedience in general, but they must descend to particulars. This message concerning the sabbath probably was sent in the days of Josiah, for the furtherance of that work of reformation which he set on foot: for the promises here, ver. 25, 26, are such, as I think, we scarce find, when things came nearer to the extremity. This message must be proclaimed in all the places of concourse, and therefore in the gates, not only because through them people were continually passing and repassing, but because in them they keep their courts and laid up their stores. It must be proclaimed (as the king or queen is usually proclaimed) at the court gate first, the gate by which the kings of Judah used to come in and go out, ver. 12. Let them be told their duty first, particularly this duty; for if sabbaths be not sanctified as they should be, the rulers of Judah are to be contended with, so they were, Neh. xiii. 17. for they are certainly wanting in their duty. He must also preach it in all the gates of Jerusalem. It is a matter of great and general concern, therefore let all take notice of it. Let the kings of Judah hear the word of the Lord, for as high as they are he is above them, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; for as mean as they are he takes notice of them, and of what they say and do on sabbath-days. Observe.

How the sabbath is to be sanctified, and what is the law concerning it, ver. 21, 22. (1.) They must rest from their worldly employments on the sabbath-day, must do no servile work. They must bear no burden, into the city, or out of it, into their houses or out of them; neither husbandmen's burdens of corn carried in, nor muck carried out; nor tradesmen's burdens of wares or merchandizes imported or exported. There must not a laden horse, or cart, or waggon be seen on the sabbath-day, either in the streets or in the roads; the porters must not ply on that day, nor must the servants be suffered to fetch in provision or fuel: it is a day of rest, and must not be made a day of labour, unless in case of necessity. (2.) They must apply themselves to that which is the proper work and business of the day; hallow

ye the sabbath, i. e. consecrate it to the honour of God, and spend it in his service and worship; and it is in order to this, that worldly business must be laid aside, that we may be *entire for, and intent upon*, that work, which *requires and deserves* the whole man. (3.) They must herein be very circumspect; *take heed to yourselves*, watch against every thing that borders upon the profanation of the sabbath. Where God is *jealous*, we must be *cautious*. *Take heed to yourselves*, for it is *at your peril*, if you rob God of that part of your time which he has referred to himself. *Take heed to your souls*, so the word is; in order to the right sanctifying of sabbaths, we must look well to the frame of our spirits, and have a watchful eye upon all the motions of the inward man; let not the soul be *burdened* with the cares of this world on sabbath-days, but let that be employed, even all that is within us, in the work of the day. And, (4.) He refers them to the law, the statute in this case made and provided: This is no new imposition upon you, but is what *I commanded your fathers*; it is an ancient law, it was an article of the original contract; nay, it was a command to the patriarchs.

2. How the sabbath had been profaned, *ver. 23*. Your fathers were required to keep holy the sabbath-day, *but they obeyed not, they hardened their necks* against this as well as other commands that were given them. This is mentioned to shew that there needed a reformation in this matter, and that God had a just controversy with them for the long transgression of this law, which they had been guilty of. They hardened their necks against this command, that they might not *hear and receive instruction* concerning other commands. Where sabbaths are neglected, all religion sensibly goes to decay.

3. What blessings God had in store for them, if they would make conscience of sabbath-sanctification. Though their fathers had been guilty of the profanation of the sabbath, they should not only not smart for it, but their city and nation should recover its ancient glory, if they would keep sabbaths better, *ver. 24, 25, 26*. Let them take care to *hallow the sabbath*, and *do no work therein*; and then,

(1.) The court shall flourish; *kings in succession*, or the many branches of the royal family at the same time, all as great as *kings*, with other the princes that sit upon the *thrones of judgment*, the *thrones of the house of David*, *Psal. exxii. 5*. shall ride in great pomp, *through the gates of Jerusalem*, some in chariots and some on horses, attended with a numerous retinue of the men of Judah. Note, The honour of the government is the joy of the kingdom; and the support of religion would contribute greatly to both.

(2.) The city should flourish. Let there be a face of religion kept up upon Jerusalem by sabbath-sanctification, that it may answer its title, *the holy city*, and then it *shall remain for ever*, shall for ever be *inhabited*, so the word may be rendered; it shall not be destroyed and despoiled, as it is threatened to be. Whatever supports religion, tends to establish the civil interests of a land.

(3.) The country shall flourish. The cities of Judah, and the land of Benjamin, shall be replenished with vast numbers of inhabitants, and those abounding in plenty and living in peace, which will appear by the multitude and value of their offerings which they shall present to God. And by this the flourishing of a country may be adjudged of; what doth it do for the honour of God. Those that sturve their religion, either they are poor, or are in a fair way to be so.

(4.) The church shall flourish. *Meat-offerings and incense, and sacrifices of praise*, shall be brought to the house of the Lord, for the maintenance of the service of that house, and the servants that attend it. God's institutions shall be conscientiously observed, no sacrifices and incense shall be offered to idols and alienated from God, but every thing shall go in the right channel. They shall have both *occasion and hearts to bring sacrifices of praise* to God. This is made an instance of their prosperity; Then a people truly flourish, when religion flourisheth among them. And this is the effect of sabbath-sanctification, when that branch of religion is kept up, other instances of it are kept up likewise, but when that is lost, devotion is lost either in superstition or profaneness. It is a true observation which some have made, that the streams of all religion run either deep or shallow, according as the banks of the sabbath are kept up or neglected.

4. What judgments they must expect would come upon them, if they persisted in the profanation of the sabbath, *ver. 27*. *If ye will not hearken to me* in this matter, to keep the gates shut on sabbath-days; so that there may be no unnecessary entering in, or going out on that day: If you will break through the inclosure of the divine law, and lay that day in common with other days, know that God will *kindle a fire in the gates of your city*; intimating, that it shall be kindled by an enemy besieging the city and assaulting the gates, and who shall take this course to force their entrance. Justly shall those gates be fired that are not used as they ought to be, to shut out sin, and to keep people in to an attendance on their duty. This fire shall devour even the *palaces of Jerusalem*, where the princes and nobles dwell, who did not use their power and interest as they ought to have done, to keep up the honour of God's sabbaths; but it *shall not be quenched*, until it has laid the whole city in ruins. This was fulfilled by the army of the Chaldeans, *chap. lii. 13*. The profanation of the sabbath is a sin for which God has often contended with a people by fire.

C H A P. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A general declaration of God's way in dealing with nations and kingdoms; that he can easily do what he will with them, as easily as the potter can with the clay, *ver. 1—6*. But that he certainly will do what is just and fair with them; if he threaten their ruin, yet upon their repentance, he will return in mercy to them, and when he is coming towards them in mercy, nothing but their sin will stop the progress of his favours, *ver. 7—10*. (2.) A particular demonstration of the *jolly of the men of Judah and Jerusalem*, in departing from their God to idols, and so bringing ruin upon themselves, notwithstanding the fair warnings given them, and God's kind intentions towards them, *ver. 11—17*. (3.) The prophet's complaint to God of the base ingratitude and unreasonable malice of his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and his prayers against them, *ver. 18—23*.

1. **T**HE word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. 3. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. 4. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. 5. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 6. O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in

the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. 7. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down; and to destroy it; 8. If that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. 9. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; 10. If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.

The prophet is here sent to the potter's house (he knew where to find it) not to preach a sermon, as before to the gates of Jerusalem, but to prepare a sermon, or rather to receive it ready prepared. Those needed not to study their sermons, that had them, as he had this, by immediate inspiration. Go to the potter's house and observe how he managed his work, and there I will cause thee, by silent whispers, to hear my words. There thou shalt receive a message to be delivered to the people. Note, Those that would know God's mind, must observe his appointments and attend there where they may hear his words. The prophet was never disobedient to the heavenly vision, and therefore went to the potter's house, *ver. 3*. and took notice how he wrought his work upon the wheels, just as he pleased, with a great deal of ease and in a little time. And, *ver. 4*. when a lump of clay that he designed to form into one shape, either proving too stiff, or having a stone in it, or some way or other came to be marred in his hand, he presently turned it into another shape; if it will not serve for a vessel of honour, it will serve for a vessel of dishonour, just as seems good to the potter. It is probable Jeremiah knew well enough how the potter wrought his work and how easily he threw it into what form he pleased; but he must go and observe it now, that having the idea of it fresh in his mind, he might the more readily and distinctly apprehend that truth which God designed thereby to represent to him, and might the more intelligently explain it to the people. God used similitudes by his servants the prophets, *Hos. xii. 10*. and it was requisite they should themselves understand the similitudes they used. Ministers will make a good use of their converse with the business and affairs of this life, if they learn thereby to speak more plainly and familiarly to people about the things of God, and to expound scripture comparisons. For they ought to make all their knowledge some way or other serviceable to their profession.

Now let us see what the message is which Jeremiah receives, and is intrusted with the delivery of, at the potter's house. While he looks carefully upon the potter's work, God darts into his mind these two great truths, which he must preach to the house of Israel.

1. That God hath both an incontestible authority, and an irresistible ability to form and fashion kingdoms and nations as he pleaseth, so as to serve his own purposes. *Cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord, ver. 6*. Have not I as absolute a power over you in respect both of might and right? Nay, God has a clearer title to a dominion over us than the potter has over the clay, for he only gives it its form, whereas we have both matter and form from God. *As the clay is in the potter's hand to be molded and shaped as he pleases, so are ye in my hand*. This intimates, (1.) That God has an incontestible sovereignty over us, is not debtor to us, may dispose of us as he thinks fit, and is not accountable to us; and it would be as absurd for us to dispute this, as for the clay to quarrel with the potter. (2.) That it is a very easy thing with God to make what use he pleaseth of us, and what changes he pleaseth with us, and we cannot resist him. One turn of the hand, one turn of the wheel, quite alters the shape of the clay, makes it a vessel, unmakes it, new makes it. Thus are our times in God's hand and not in our own, and it is in vain for us to strive with him. It is spoken here of nations, the most politic, the most potent, are what God is pleased to make them and no other; see this explained by Job, *chap. xii. 23*. *He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them, he enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again*, *Psal. cvii. 33*. &c. and compare Job xxxiv. 29. *All nations before God are as the drop of the bucket, soon wiped away, or the small dust of the balance, soon blown away*, *Isa. xl. 15*. and therefore, no doubt, as easily managed as the clay by the potter. (3.) That God will not be a loser by any in his glory at long run, but if he be not glorified by them, he will be glorified upon them. If the potter's vessel be marred for one use, it shall serve for another; those that will not be monuments of mercy, shall be monuments of justice: *The Lord has made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil*, *Prov. xvi. 4*. God formed us out of the clay, *Job xxxiii. 6*. nay, and we are still as clay in his hands, *Isa. lxiv. 8*. and has not he the same power over us, that the potter has over the clay? *Rom. ix. 21*. and are not we bound to submit, as the clay to the potter's wisdom and will? *Isa. xxix. 15, 16*.—*xlv. 9*.

2. That in the exercise of this authority and ability he always goes by fixed rules of equity and goodness. He dispenseth favours indeed in a way of sovereignty, but never punisheth by arbitrary power. *High is his right hand*, yet he rules not with a high hand, but as it follows there, *Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne*, *Psal. lxxxix. 13, 14*. God asserts his despotic power, and tells us what he might do, but at the same time assures us, he will act as a righteous and merciful judge.

1. When God is coming against us in ways of judgment, we may be sure it is for our sins, which shall appear by this, that national repentance will stop the progress of the judgments, *ver. 7, 8*. If God speak concerning a nation, to pluck up its fences that secure it and so lay it open, its fruit-trees that adorn and enrich it, and so leave it desolate; to pull down its fortifications, that the enemy may have liberty to enter in; its habitations, that the inhabitants may be under a necessity of going out, and so destroy it, as either a vineyard or a city is destroyed: in this case, if that nation take the alarm, and repent of their sins and reform their lives, turn every one from his evil way and return to God, God will graciously accept them, will not proceed in his controversy, will return in mercy to them, and though he cannot change his mind, he will change his way, so as that it may be said he repents him of the evil he said he would do to them. Thus often in the time of the judges, when the oppressed people were penitent people, still God raised them up saviours, and when they turned to God, their affairs presently took a new turn. It was Nineveh's case, and we with it had oftener been Jerusalem's, see 2 Chron. vii. 14. It is an undoubted truth that a sincere conversion from the evil of sin will be an effectual prevention of the evil of punishment; and God can as easily raise up a penitent people from their ruins, as the potter can make anew the vessel of clay, when it was marred in his hand.

2. When God is coming towards us in ways of mercy, if any stop be given to the progress of that mercy, it is nothing but sin that gives it, *ver. 9, 10*. If God speak concerning a nation, to build and to plant it, i. e. to advance and establish all the true interests of it; it is his husbandry and

and his building: 1. Cor. iii. 9. and if he spoke in favour of it, it is done, it is increased, it is enriched; it is enlarged, its trade flourisheth, its government is settled in good hands, and all its affairs prosper, and its enterprises succeed. But if this nation which God had thus loaded with benefits, do evil in his sight, and obey not his voice, if it lose its virtue and become debauched and profane; if religion grow into contempt, and vice get to be fashionable, and so be kept in countenance and reputation, and there be a general decay of serious godliness among them, then God will turn his hand against them, will pluck up what he was planting, and pull down what he was building, Jer. xlv. 4. the good work that was in the doing, shall stand still and be let fall; and what favours were farther designed shall be withheld, and this is called his *repenting of the good wherewith he said he would benefit them*, as he changed his purpose concerning Eli's house, 1 Sam. ii. 36. and hurried Hiel back into the wilderness, when he had brought them within sight of Canaan. Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker between God and a people: it forfeits the benefit of his promises and spoils the success of their prayers. It defeats his kind intentions concerning them, Hag. vii. 1. and baffles their pleasing expectations from him. It ruins their comforts, prolongs their grievances, brings them into fruits, and retards their deliverances, Isa. lix. 1, 2.

11. ¶ Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. 12. And they said, There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. 13. Therefore thus saith the LORD: Ask ye now among the heathen who hath heard such things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. 14. Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? 15. Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up; 16. To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head. 17. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

These verses seem to be the application of the general truths laid down in the foregoing part of the chapter, to the nation of the Jews and their present state.

1. God was now speaking concerning them, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy; for it is that part of the rule of judgment that their case agrees with, ver. 11. *Go and tell them (saith God) Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you.* Providence in all its operations is plainly working towards your ruin. Look upon your carriage towards God, and you cannot but see that you deserve it; look upon his dealings with you, and you cannot but see that he designs it. He frames evil, as the potter frames the vessel, so as to answer the end.

2. He invites them by repentance and reformation to meet him in the way of his judgments, and so to prevent his further proceedings against them; *return ye now every one from his evil ways*, that so according to the rule before laid down, God may turn from the evil he had proposed to do unto you, and that providence which seemed to have been framed like a vessel on the wheel against you, shall presently be thrown into a new shape, and the issue shall be in favour of you. Note, The warnings of God's word and the threatenings of his providence, should be improved by us as strong inducements to us to reform our lives; in which it is not enough to turn from our evil ways, but we must make our ways and our doings good, conformable to the rule, to the law.

3. He foresees their obstinacy and their perverse refusal to comply with this invitation, though it tended so much to their own benefit, ver. 12. They said, *There is no hope.* If we must not be delivered unless we return from our evil ways, we may even despair of ever being delivered, for we are resolved we will walk after our own devices. It is to no purpose for the prophets to say any more to us, to use any more arguments, or press the matter any farther, we will have our way whatever it cost us; we will do every one the imagination of his own evil heart, and will not be under the restraint of the divine law. Note, That which ruins sinners, is affecting to live as they list; they call it *liberty to live at large*, whereas for a man to be a slave to his lusts, is the worst of slaveries. See how strangely some men's hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, that they will not so much as promise amendment; nay, they set the judgments of God at defiance; we will go on with our own devices, and let God go on with his, and we will venture the issue.

4. He upbraids them with the monstrous folly of their obstinacy, and their hating to be reformed: Surely never were people guilty of such an absurdity, never any that pretended to reason acted so unreasonably, ver. 13. *Ask ye among the heathen*, even those that had not the benefit of divine revelation, no oracles, no prophets, as Judah and Jerusalem had, yet even among them, *Who hath heard such a thing?* The Ninevites, when thus warned, turned from their evil ways: Some of the worst of men, when they are told of their faults, especially when they begin to smart for them, will at least promise reformation, and say they will endeavour to mend: But the virgin of Israel bids defiance to repentance, is resolved to go on frowardly, whatever conscience and providence say to the contrary, and thus hath done a horrible thing: She should have preserved herself pure and chaste for God, who had espoused her to himself, but she has alienated herself from him, and refuseth to return to him. Note, It is a horrible thing, enough to make one tremble to think of it, that those who have made their condition sad by sinning, should make it desperate by refusing to reform. Willful impenitency is the grossest self-murder, and that is a horrible thing, which we should abhor the thought of.

He shews their folly in two things:

(1.) In the nature of the sin itself that they were guilty of: They forsook God for idols, which was the most horrible thing that could be, for they perfectly put a cheat upon themselves, ver. 14, 15. *Will a thirsty traveller leave the snow*, that being melted runs down from the moun-

tains of Lebanon, and, passing over the rock of the field, flows in clear clean crystal streams? will he leave these, pass these by, and think to mend himself with some dirty puddle-water? Or, shall the cold flowing waters that come from any other place be forsaken in the heat of summer? No: when men are parched with heat and drought, and meet with cooling refreshing streams, they will make use of them, and not turn their backs upon them. The margin reads it, *Will a man*, that is travelling the road, leave my fields, which are plain and level, for a rock, that is rough and hard, or for the snow of Lebanon, which lying in great drifts, makes the road unpassable? Or, shall the running waters be forsaken for the strange cold waters? No; in these things men know when they are well, and will keep so; they will not leave a certainty for an uncertainty; but my people hath forgotten me, ver. 15. hath quitted a fountain of living waters, for broken cisterns; they have burned incense to idols, they are as vain as vanity itself, that are not what they pretend to be, nor can perform what is expected from them: They had not the common wit of travellers, but even their leaders caused them to err, and they were content to be misled. 1. They left the ancient paths, which were appointed by the divine law, which had been walked in by all the saints, which was therefore the right way to their journey's end, a safe way, and being well tracked was both easy to hit, and easy to walk in: but when they were advised to keep to the good old way, they positively said they would not, Jer. vi. 16. 2. They chose by-paths; they walked in a way not cast up: not in the highway, the king's highway, in which they might travel safely, and which would certainly lead them to the right end; but in a dirty way, a rough way, a way in which they could not but stumble; such was the way of idolatry, such is the way of all iniquity; it is a false way, it is a way full of stumbling blocks, and yet this way they chose to walk in and lead others in.

(2.) In the mischievous consequences of it. Though the thing itself had been ill, they might have had some excuse for it, if they could have promised themselves any good out of it: But the direct tendency of it was to make their land desolate, and consequently themselves miserable (for so the inhabitants must needs be, if their country be laid waste) and both themselves and their land a perpetual hissing. Those deserve to be hissed that have fair warning given them, and will not take it. Every one that passeth by their land shall make his remarks upon it, and shall be astonished, and wag his head; some admiring, others commiserating, others triumphing in the desolation of a country that had been the glory of all lands. They shall wag their heads in derision, upbraiding them with their folly in forsaking God and their duty, and so pulling this misery upon their own heads. Note, Those that revolt from God will justly be made the scorn of all about them; and having reproached the Lord will themselves be a reproach. Their land being made desolate, in pursuance of their destruction it is threatened, ver. 17. *I will scatter them as with an east wind*, which is fierce and violent, by it they shall be hurried to and fro before the enemy, and find no way open to escape: They shall not only flee before the enemy, that they may do, and yet make an orderly retreat, but they shall be scattered, some one way, and some another: And that which completes their misery is, *I will shew them the back and not the face in the day of their calamity.* Our calamities may be easily born if God look towards us and smile upon us when we are under them, if he countenance us and shew us favour; but if he turn the back upon us, if he shew himself displeased, if he be deaf to our prayers and refuse us his help; if he forsake us, leave us to ourselves, and stand at a distance from us, we are quite undone. If he hide his face, who then can behold him? Job xxxiv. 29. Herein God would deal with them as they had dealt with him, chap. ii. 27. they have turned their backs unto me, and not their face. It is a righteous thing with God to shew himself strange to those in the day of their trouble, who have shewed themselves rude and undutiful to him in their prosperity. This will have its full accomplishment in that day, when God will say to those, that though they have been professors of piety, yet were workers of iniquity, *Depart from me, I know you not, nay, I never knew you.*

18. ¶ Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words. 19. Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. 20. Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them. 21. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows: and let their men be put to death: let their young men be slain by the sword in battle. 22. Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them; for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet. 23. Yet LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee: deal thus with them in the time of thine anger.

The prophet here, as sometimes before, brings in his own affairs, but very much for instruction to us.

(1.) See here what are the common methods of the persecutors: We may see this in Jeremiah's enemies, ver. 18.

1. They laid their heads together, to consult what they should do against him, both to be revenged on him for what he had said, and to stop his mouth for the future. They said, *Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah.* The enemies of God's people and ministers have been often very crafty themselves, and confederate with one another, to do them mischief: What they cannot act to the prejudice of religion separately, they will try to do in concert. The wicked plotteth against the just. Caiaphas, and the chief priest and elders, did so against our blessed Saviour himself. The opposition which the gates of hell give to the kingdom of heaven is carried on with a great deal of cursed policy. God had said, ver. 17. *I devise a device against you*; and now, as if they resolved to be quits with him, and to outwit infinite wisdom itself, they resolved to devise devices against God's prophet, not only against his person, but against the word he delivered to them, which they thought by their subtil managements to defeat.

defeat. O the prodigious madness of those that hope to disannul God's counsel!

2. Herein they pretended a mighty zeal for the church, which they suggested was in danger, if Jeremiah was tolerated to preach as he did. *Come say they, let us silence and crush him, for the law shall not perish from the priest; the law of truth is in their mouths.* Mal. ii. 6. and there we will seek it; the administration of ordinances according to the law, is in their hands, and neither the one nor the other shall be wrested from them. *Counsel shall not perish from the wise;* the administration of public affairs shall always be lodged with the privy-councillors and ministers of state, to whom it belongs; nor shall the word perish from the prophets, they mean those of their own choosing, that prophesied to them smooth things, and flattered them with visions of peace. Two things they insinuated, 1. That Jeremiah could not be himself a true prophet, but was a pretender and an usurper, because he was neither commissioned by the priests, nor concurred with the other prophets, whose authority therefore will be despised, if he be suffered to go on. If Jeremiah be regarded as an oracle, farewell the reputation of our priests, our wise men and prophets; but that must be supported, which is reason enough why he must be suppressed. 2. That the matter of his prophecies could not be from God, because it reflected sometimes upon the prophets and priests; he had charged them with being the ring-leaders of all the mischief, chap. v. 31. and deceiving the people, chap. xiv. 14. he had foretold that their heart should perish, and be astonished, chap. iv. 9. that the wise men should be dismayed, chap. viii. 9, 10. that the priests and prophets should be intoxicated, chap. xiii. 13. now this galled them more than any thing else: prebasing upon the promise of God's presence with their priests and prophets, they could not believe he would ever leave them: The guides of the church must needs be infallible and therefore he who foretold their being infatuated, must be condemned as a false prophet. Thus, under colour of zeal for the church, have its best friends been run down.

3. They agreed to do all they could to blash his reputation. *Come, let us smite him with the tongue,* put him into an ill name, sicken an ill character upon him, represent him to some as despicable, and fit to be slighted; to others, as dangerous, and fit to be prosecuted; to all, as odious, and not fit to be tolerated. This was their advice, *fortior calumniari, aliquid adhibebit*, to dress him up in bear-skins, otherwise they could not bait him. They who projected this, it is likely, were men of figure, whose tongue was no small slander, whose representations, though never so false, would be credited both by priors and people, to make him obnoxious to the justice of the one and fury of the other: the scourge of such tongues will give not only smart lashes, but deep wounds; it is a great mercy therefore to be hid from it, Job. v. 21.

4. To set others an example, they resolved they would not themselves regard any thing he said, though it appeared never so weighty, and never so well confirmed: as a message from God. *Let us not give heed to any of his words,* for, right or wrong, they will look upon them to be his words, and not the words of God. What good can be done with those who bear the word of God, with a resolution not to heed or believe it? Nay,

5. That they may effectually silence him, they resolve to be the death of him, ver. 23. *All their counsel against me is to slay me;* they hunt for the precious life; and a precious life indeed! it was that they hunted for. Long was this Jerusalem's wretched character, *thou that killest many of the prophets,* and wouldst have killed them all.

(2.) See here what is the common relief of the persecuted: this we may see in the course that Jeremiah took, when he met with this hard usage; he presently applied himself to God by prayer, and so gave himself ease.

1. He referred himself and his cause to God's cognisance, ver. 19. They would not regard a word he said, would not admit his complaints, or take any notice of his grievances, but *Lord* (saith he) *dost thou give heed to me.* It is a matter of comfort to faithful ministers, that if men will not give heed to their preaching, yet God will give heed to their praying. He appeals to God as an impartial Judge; that will hear both sides, as every Judge ought to do: Do not only give heed to me but *hearken to the voice of them that contend with me;* hear what they have to say against me, and for themselves, and then make it to appear, that thou *sittest in the throne judging right.* Hear the voice of my contenders, how noisy and clamorous they are, how false a malicious all they say is, and let them be judged out of their own mouth; *cause their own tongues to fall upon them.*

2. He complains of their base ingratitude to him, ver. 20. *Shall evil be recompensed for good?* and shall it go unpunished? Wilt not thou recompense me good for that evil? 2. Sam. xvi. 12. To render good for good is human, evil for evil is brutish, good for evil is Christian, but evil for good is devilish; it is so very absurd and wicked a thing, that we cannot think but God will avenge it. See how great the evil was they did against him; *they digged a pit for his soul;* they aimed to take away his life, no less would satisfy them, and that, not in a generous way, by an open assault, against which he might have an opportunity of defending himself, but in a base, cowardly, clandestine way *they digged pits for him,* which there was no fence against, Psalm cxix. 85. But see how great the good was which he had done for them: *Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them;* he had been an intercessor with God for them, had used his interest in heaven on their behalf, which was the greatest kindness they could expect from one of his character, Gen. xv. 7. *He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee.* This Moses often did for Israel, and yet they quarrelled with him, and sometimes *spake of slaying him.* He did them this kindness when they were in imminent danger of destruction, and most needed it. They had themselves provoked God's wrath against them, and it was ready to break in upon them, but he stood in the gap, as Moses, Psalm cxi. 23. and turned away that wrath. Now, 1. This was very base in them: call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse; but it was not strange that they who had forgotten their God, did not know their best friends. 2. It was very grievous to him, as the like was to David, Psalm xxxv. 13. and Psalm cix. 4. *For my love they are my adversaries.* And thus distinguishingly deal with sinners with the great intercessor, crucifying him afresh, and speaking against him on earth, while his blood is speaking for them in heaven. See John 5. 32. But, 3. It was a comfort to the prophet, that, when they were so spiteful against him, he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had done his duty to them; and the same will be our rejoicing in such a day of evil: *The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul,* Prov. xxix. 13.

3. He imprecates the judgments of God upon them, not from a revengeful disposition, but in a prophetic indignation against their horrid wickedness, ver. 21, 22, 23. He prays, 1. That their families might be starved for want of bread; *deliver up their children to the famine,* to the famine in the country for want of rain, and that in the city through the straits of the siege: thus let this iniquity of the fathers be visited upon the children.

2. That they might be cut off by the sword of war, which, whatever it was in the enemy's hand, would be in God's hand a sword of justice. *Pour them out* (so the word is) *by the hands of the sword let their blood be shed as profusely as water,* that their wives may be left childless and widows,

their husbands being taken away by death, or, as some understand it, by the pestilence. *Let their young men* that are the strength of this generation, and the hopes of the next, *be slain by the sword in battle.* 3. That the terrors and desolations of war might seize them suddenly and by surprise, that thus their punishment might answer their sin, ver. 22. *Let a cry be heard from their houses loud shrieks, when thou shalt bring a troop of the Chaldeans suddenly upon them,* to seize them and all they have, to make them prisoners and their estates a prey; for thus they would have done by Jeremiah, they aimed to ruin him at once ere he was aware, *they have digged a pit for me,* as for a wild beast; and have hid snares for me, as for some ravenous, noxious fowl. Note, They that think to ensnare others, will justly be themselves ensnared in an evil time. That they might be dealt with according to the desert of this sin, which was without excuse, *Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight,* i. e. let them not escape the just punishment of it; let them be under all the miseries of those whose sins are unpardoned. 5. That God's wrath against them might be their ruin. *Let them be overthrown before thee.* This intimates, that justice is in pursuit of them, that they endeavour to make their escape from it, but in vain; they shall be made to stumble in their flight, and, being overthrown, they will certainly be overtaken: And then, Lord, in the time of thine anger, do to them; he doth not say what he would have done to them; but do to them as thou thinkest fit, as thou wilt to do with those whom thou art angry with: *deal thus with them.*

Now this is not written for our imitation: Jeremiah was a prophet, and by the impulse of the spirit of prophecy in the foresight of the ruin certainly coming upon his persecutors, might say such prayers as we may not; and if we think, by his example, to justify ourselves in such imprecations, we know not what manner of spirit we are of: our Master has taught us, by his precept and pattern, to *bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us;* yet it is written for our instruction, and is of use to teach us, 1. That those who have received the benefit of the prayers of God's prophets for them, may justly expect to have their prayers against them. 2. That persecution is a sin that brings the measure of a people's iniquity very full, and will bring as sure and so a destruction upon them as any other. 3. Those that will not be won upon by the kindness of God and his prophets, will certainly at length feel the just resentments of both.

C H A P. XIX.

The same melancholy theme is the subject of this chapter, that was of those foregoing, the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins; this Jeremiah had often foretold; here he has particular fall orders to do it again. 1. He must set their sins in order before them, as he had often done, especially their idolatry, ver. 4, 5. 2. He must describe the particular judgments which were now coming apace upon them for their sins, ver. 6-11. 3. He must do this in the valley of Tophet, with great solemnity, and for some particular reason, ver. 2, 3. 4. He must summon a company of the elders together, to be witnesses of this, ver. 1. 5. He must confirm this, and endeavour to affect his hearers with it, by a sign, which was the breaking of an earthen bottle, signifying that they should be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel, ver. 10-13. 6. When he had done this in the valley of Tophet, he ratified it in the court of the temple, ver. 14, 15. Thus were all likely means tried to awaken this stupid, senseless people to repentance, that their ruin might be prevented, but all in vain.

1. **THUS** saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests; 2. And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east-gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee; 3. And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. 4. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto others gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; 5. They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind: 6. Therefore, behold the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall be no more called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter. 7. And I will make void the counsel of Jehoiakim and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. 8. And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof. 9. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

The corruption of man having made it necessary that precept should be upon precept, and line upon line, so unapt are we to receive, and so very apt to let slip the things of God, the grace of God has provided that there shall be accordingly precept upon precept, and line upon line, that those who are irreclaimable, may be inexorable. For this reason the prophet here is sent with a message to the same purpose with what he had often delivered, but with some circumstances that might make it the more taken notice of, a thing which ministers should study, for a little circumstance may sometimes be a great advantage, and they that would win souls must be wise.

1. He must take of the elders and chief men, both in church and state,

to be his auditors and witnesses to what he said: *the ancients of the people, and the ancients of the priests*, the most eminent men both in the magistracy and in the ministry, that they might be *faithful witnesses to record*, as those, *Iſa. viii. 2.* It is strange that these great men would be at the beck of a poor prophet, and obey his summons to attend him out of the city, they knew not whither, and they knew not why. But though the generality of the elders were disaffected to him, yet it is likely, there were some few among them who looked upon him as a prophet of the Lord, and would pay this respect to the heavenly vision. Note, Persons of rank and figure have an opportunity of honouring God by a diligent attendance on the ministry of the word, and other divine institutions; and they ought to think it an honour, and no disparagement to themselves, yea though the circumstances be mean and despicable: It is certain, the greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of God.

2. He must go to the valley of the ſun of Hinnom, and deliver this message there; for the word of the Lord is not bound to any one place; as good a sermon may be preached in the valley of Tophet, as in the gate of the temple: Christ preached on a mountain, and out of a ship. This valley lay partly on the south side of Jerusalem, but the prophet's way to it was by the entry of the east gate, ver. 2. the ſun gate, so some render it, and suppose it to look not towards the sun-rising, but the noon-sun: The potters' gate, so some. This sermon must be preached in that place, in the valley of the ſun of Hinnom, 1. Because there they had been guilty of the vilest of their idolatries, the sacrificing of their children to Moloch, a horrid piece of impiety, which the sight of the place might serve to mind them of, and upbraid them with. 2. Because there they should feel the force of their iniquities; there the greatest slaughter should be made among them; and it being the common sink of the city, let them look upon it, and see what a miserable spectacle this magnificent city would be, when it should be all like the valley of Tophet. God bids him go thither, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee, when thou comest thither; whereby it appears (as Mr. Gataker well observes) that God's messages many times were not revealed to the prophets before the very instant of time wherein they were to deliver them.

3. He must give general notice of a general ruin now shortly coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 3. He must, as those that make proclamation, begin with an Oyez, *Hear ye the word of the Lord*, though it be a terrible word, for you may thank yourselves if it be so. Both rulers and ruled must attend to it at their peril; the kings of Judah, i. e. the king and his sons, the king, and his princes, and privy-counsellors, they must hear the word of the King of kings, for as high as they are, he is above them: The inhabitants of Jerusalem also must hear what God hath to say to them: Both princes and people have contributed to the national guilt, and must concur in the national repentance, or they will both share in the national ruin. Let them all know that the Lord of hosts, who is therefore able to do what he threatens, though he is the God of Israel, nay, because he is so, will therefore punish them in the first place for their iniquities, *Amos iii. 2.* he will bring evil upon this place, i. e. upon Judah and Jerusalem, so surprising and so dreadful, that whosoever hears it, his ears shall tingle; hears the prediction of it, hears the report and representation of it; it shall make such an impression of terror upon him, that he shall still think he hears it sounding in his ears, and shall not be able to get it out of his mind. The ruin of Eli's house is thus described, *1 Sam. iii. 11.* and of Jerusalem, *2 Kings xxi. 12.*

4. He must plainly tell them what their sins were for which God hath this controversy with them, ver. 4, 5. Apostasy from God, they have forsaken me; abuse of the privileges of the visible church, with which they had been dignified; they have estranged this place, Jerusalem, the holy city, the temple, the holy house, which were designed for the honour of God, and the support of his kingdom among men, they had alienated from those purposes, and (as some render the word) they had strangely abused: They had so polluted both with their wickedness, that God had disowned both, and abandoned them to ruin. He chargeth them with an abomination for, and the adoration of false gods, such as neither they nor their fathers have known, such as never had recommended themselves to their belief and esteem, by any acts of power or goodness done for them or their ancestors, as that God had abundantly done whom they forsook, yet they took them at a venture for their gods: Nay, being fond of change and novelty, they liked them the better for their being upstarts; and new fashions in religion were as grateful to their fancies as in other things: They also stand charged with murder, willful murder, from malice premeditated; they have filled this place with the blood of innocents. It was Manasse's sin, *2 Kings xxiv. 4.* which the Lord would not pardon. Nay, as if idolatry and murder committed separately were not bad enough, and affront enough to God and man, they have put them together, have consolidated them into one complicated crime, that of burning their children in the fire of Baal, ver. 5, which was the most insolent defiance to all the laws both of natural and revealed religion, that ever mankind was guilty of; and by it they openly declared, they loved their new gods better than ever they loved the true God, though they were such cruel task-masters, that they required human sacrifices, inhuman I should call them, which the Lord Jehovah, whose all lives and souls are, never demanded from his worshippers, never spake of such a thing, nor came it into his mind. See chap. vii. 31.

5. He must endeavour to affect them with the greatness of the desolation that was coming upon them: He must tell them, as he had done before, chap. vii. 32, that this valley of the ſun of Hinnom shall acquire a new name, the valley of slaughter, ver. 6, for, ver. 7, multitudes shall fall there by the sword, when either they fall out upon the besiegers and are repulsed; or attempt to make their escape and are seized: they shall fall before their enemies, who not only endeavour to make themselves masters of their houses and estates, but have such an implacable enmity to them, that they seek their lives, they thirst after their blood, and when they are dead, will not allow a cartel for the burying of the slain, but their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and beasts of the earth. What a dismal place will the valley of Tophet be then! And as for those that remain within the city, and will not capitulate with the besiegers, they shall perish for want of food, when first they have eaten the flesh of their sons and daughters, and dearest friends, through the straits wherewith their enemies shall straiten them, ver. 9. This was threatened in the law, as an instance of the extremity to which the judgments of God should reduce them, *Lev. xxvi. 29.* *Deut. xxviii. 23.* and was accomplished, *1 Sam. iv. 10.* And lastly, the whole city shall be desolate, the houses laid in ashes, the inhabitants slain, or taken prisoners; there shall be no resort to it, nor any thing in it, but what looks cruel and horrid; so that every one that passeth by shall be astonished, ver. 8, as he had said before, chap. xviii. 16, That place which holiness had made the joy of the whole earth, sin had made the reproof and shame of the whole earth.

6. He must assure them, that all their attempts to prevent and avoid this ruin, so long as they continued impenitent and unreformed, would be fruitless and vain, ver. 7. I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem, i. e. of the princes and senators of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, in the royal palace, which lay on the south-side of the city, not far from the

place where the prophet now stood. Note, There is no fleeing from God's justice, but by fleeing to his mercy. They that will not make good God's counsel, by humbling themselves under his mighty hand, God will make void their counsel, and blast their projects, which they think never so well concerted for their own preservation. There is no counsel or strength against the Lord.

10. Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee. 11. And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury. 12. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet: 13. And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods. 14. Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD's house; and said to all the people, 15. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

The message of wrath delivered in the foregoing verses is here enforced that it might gain credit two ways:

1. By a visible sign. The prophet was to take along with him an earthen bottle, ver. 1, and when he had delivered his message, he was to break the bottle to pieces, ver. 14, and the same that were auditors of the sermon, must be spectators of the sign. He had compared this people, in the chapter before, to the potter's clay, which is easily marred in the making; but some might say, It is past that with us, we have been made and hardened long since: and what though you be? saith he, the potter's vessel is as soon broke in the hand of any man, as the vessel while it is soft clay is marred in the potter's hand, and its case in this respect much worse; that the vessel, while it is soft clay, though it be marred, may be moulded again, but after it is hardened, when it is broke it can never be pieced again. Perhaps what they see will affect them more than what they only hear talk of; that is the intention of sacramental signs, and teaching by symbols was anciently used. In the explication of this sign, he must inculcate what he had before said, with a further reference to the place where this was done, in the valley of Tophet.

(1.) As the bottle was easily, irreversibly, and irrecoverably broke, so shall Judah and Jerusalem be broke by the Chaldean army, ver. 11. They depended much upon the firmness of their constitution, and fixedness of their courage, which they thought hardened them like a vessel of brass; but the prophet shows, all that did but harden them like a vessel of earth, which though hard as bottle, and sooner broke than that which is not so hard. Though they were made vessels of honour, still they were vessels of earth, and so they shall be made to know if they dishonour God and themselves, and serve not the purposes for which they were made. It is God himself who made them, that resolves to unmake them: I will break this people, and this city, dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel; the doom of the heathen, *Psal. ii. 9.* *Rev. ii. 27.* but now Jerusalem's doom, *Iſa. xxx. 14.* A potter's vessel, when once broke, cannot be made whole again, cannot be cured, for the word is: The ruin of Jerusalem shall be an utter ruin; no hand can repair it, but his that broke it; and if they return to him, though he has torn he will heal.

(2.) This was done in Tophet to signify two things:

1. That Tophet should be the receptacle of the slain: They shall bury in Tophet, for want of room to bury elsewhere; so some read it; and if they had conveniences any where else, they would not have buried there, where all the filth of the city was carried. Or as we read it, They shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place to bury any more there; they shall juggle for room to lay their dead: and a very little room will then serve those, who while they lived laid house to house, and field to field. They that would be placed alone in the midst of the earth, while they were above ground, and obliged all about them to keep their distance, must lie with the multitude when they are under ground, for there are innumerable before them.

2. That Tophet should be a resemblance of the whole city, ver. 12. I will make this city as Tophet. As they had filled the valley of Tophet with the slain which they sacrificed to their idols, so God will fill the whole city with the slain, that shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God. We read, *2 Kings xxiii. 19.* of Josiah's defiling Tophet, because it had been abused to idolatry; which he did as should seem, ver. 14, by filling it with the bones of men; and, whatever it was before, from thenceforward it was looked upon as a detestable place: Dead carcasses and other filth of the city were carried thither, and a fire continually kept there, for the burning of it. This was the posture of that valley, when Jeremiah was sent thither to prophesy; and so execrable a place was it looked upon to be, that in the language of our Saviour's time hell was called, in allusion to it, *Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom*. Now, saith God, since that blessed reformation, when Tophet was defiled, did not proceed as it ought to have done, nor prove a thorough reformation; but though the idols in Tophet were abolished and made odious, those in Jerusalem remained, therefore will I do with the city as Josiah did by Tophet, fill it with the bodies of men, and make it an heap of rubbish: Even the houses of Jerusalem, and those of the kings of Judah, the royal palaces not excepted, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, ver. 13, and for the same reason, because of the idolatries that have been committed there; since they will not defile them by a reformation, God will defile them by a destruction, because upon the roofs of their houses they have burned incense unto the host of heaven. The flat roofs of their houses were sometimes used by devout people as convenient places for prayer, *Acts x. 9.* and by idolaters they were used as high places, on which they sacrificed to strange gods, especially to the host of heaven, the sun, the moon, and stars, that there they might be so much nearer to them, and have a clearer and fuller view of them. We read of those that worshipped the host of heaven upon the house-tops, *Zeph. i. 5.* and of altars on the top of the upper chamber of Ahas, *2 Kings xxiii. 12.* This sin upon the house-tops brought a curse into the house, which consumed it, and made it a dunghill like Tophet.

2. By a solemn recognition and ratification of what he had said, *in the court of the Lord's house*, ver. 14, 15. The prophet returned from Tophet to the temple, which stood upon the hill over that valley, and there confirmed, and probably repeated what he had said in the valley of Tophet, for the benefit of those who had not heard it; what he had said, he would stand to. Here, as often before, he both assures them of judgments coming upon them, and assigns the cause of them, which was their sin. Both these are here put together in a little compass with a reference to all that had gone before. 1. The accomplishment of the prophecies is here the judgment threatened. The people flattered themselves with a conceit that God would be better than his word; the threatening was but to frighten them, and keep them in awe a little; but the prophet tells them, they deceive themselves if they think so; for *thus saith the Lord of hosts*, that is able to make his works good, *I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns*, all the lesser cities that belong to Jerusalem the metropolis, *all the evil that I have pronounced against it*. Note, Whatever men may think to the contrary, the executions of providence will fully answer the predictions of the word; and God will appear as terrible against sin and sinners, as the scripture makes him; nor shall the unbelief of men make either his promise or his threatening of none effect, or of less effect than it was thought to be of. 2. The contempt of the prophecies is here the sin charged upon them, as the procuring cause of this judgment. It is *because they have hardened their necks*, and would not bow and bend them to the yoke of God's commands, would *not hear my words*, i. e. would not heed them, and yield obedience to them. Note, The obstinacy of sinners in their sinful ways, is altogether long of themselves; if their necks are hardened, it is their own act and deed, they have hardened them; if they are deaf to the word of God, it is because they have stopped their own ears. We have need therefore to pray, that God by his grace, would deliver us *from hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and commandments*.

C H A P. XX.

Such plain-dealings as Jeremiah used in the foregoing chapter, one might easily foresee, if it did not convince and humble men, it would provoke and exasperate them, and so it did; for here we find, 1. Jeremiah persecuted by Pashur, for preaching that sermon, ver. 1, 2. 2. Pashur threatened for so doing, and the word which Jeremiah had preached confirmed, ver. 3—6. 3. Jeremiah complaining to God concerning it, and the other instances of hard measures that he had since he began to be a prophet, and the grievous temptations he had struggled with, ver. 7—10. encouraging himself in God, lodging his appeal with him, not doubting but that he shall yet praise him, by which it appears he had much grace, ver. 11—13. and yet peerily cursing the day of his birth, ver. 14—18, by which it appears he had sad remainders of corruption in him too, and was a man subject to like passions as we are.

1. **N**OW Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. 2. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD. 3. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-misabib. 4. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. 5. Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hands of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. 6. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

Here is, 1. Pashur's unjust displeasure against Jeremiah, and the fruits of that displeasure, ver. 1, 2. This Pashur was a priest, and therefore one would think should have protected Jeremiah, who was of his own order, a priest too; and the more, because he was a prophet of the Lord, whose interests the priests, his ministers ought to consult: but this priest was a persecutor of him whom he should have patronised. He was *the son of Immer*, i. e. he was of the sixteenth course of the priests, of which Immer, when these courses were first settled by David, was father, 1 Chron. xxvi. 14. as Zachariah was of the order of Abiah, Luke, i. 5. Thus this Pashur is distinguished from another of the same name, mentioned chap. xxi. 4. that was of the fifth course. This Pashur was *chief governor in the temple*; perhaps he was only *pro tempore*, the course he was head of being now in waiting; or he was suffragan to the high priests; or perhaps captain of the temple, or of the guards about it, Acts iv. 1. This was Jeremiah's great enemy. The greatest malignity to God's prophets was found among those that professed sanctity and concern for God and the church.

We cannot suppose that Pashur was any of those ancients of the priests that went with Jeremiah to the valley of Tophet to hear him prophesy, unless it were with a malicious design to take advantage against him: but when he came into the courts of the Lord's house, it is probable, he was himself a witness of what he said; and so it may be read, ver. 1. *He heard Jeremiah prophesying these things*. As we read it, the information was brought him by others, whose examinations he took; *he heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things* and could not bear it; especially that he should dare to preach in the courts of the Lord's house, where he was *chief governor*, without his leave. When power in the church is abused, it is the most dangerous power of all other against it. Being incensed at Jeremiah, (1.) *He smote him*, struck him with his hand or staff of authority: Perhaps it was a blow intended only to disgrace him, like that which the high priest ordered to be given Paul, Acts xxiii. 2. he struck him on the mouth, and bid him hold his prating. Or perhaps he gave him many blows, intended to hurt him;

he beat him soundly as a malefactor. It is charged upon the high priests, Matt. xxi. 45, that they beat the servants. The method of proceeding here was illegal: the high-priest and the rest of the priests ought to have been consulted, Jeremiah's credentials examined, and the matter enquired into, whether he had an authority to say what he said. But these rules of justice are set aside and despised as mere formalities; right or wrong Jeremiah must be run down. The enemies of piety would never suffer themselves to be bound by the laws of equity. (2.) *He put him in the stocks*. Some make it only a place of confinement; he imprisoned him. It rather seems to be an instrument of closer restraint than so, and intended to put him both to pain and shame. Some think it was a pillory for his neck and arms; other (as we) a pair of stocks for his legs; whatever engine it was he continued in it all night, and in a public place too, *in the high gate of Benjamin, which was in or by the house of the Lord*: probably a gate through which they passed between the city and the temple. Pashur intended thus to chastise him, that he might deter him from prophesying; and thus to expose him to contempt, and render him odious, that he might not be regarded if he did prophesy. Thus have the best men met with the worst treatment from this ungracious, ungrateful world; and the greatest blessings of their age have been counted as the *off-scouring of all things*. Would it not rouse a pious indignation, to see such a man as Pashur upon the bench, and such a man as Jeremiah in the stocks? It is well there is another life after this, when persons and things will appear with another face.

2. God's just displeasure against Pashur and the tokens of that: *On the morrow Pashur gave Jeremiah his discharge, brought him out of the stocks*, ver. 3. it is likely he continued him there, in little ease, as long as was usual to continue any in that punishment. And now Jeremiah has a message from God to him. We do not find that when he put him into the stocks, he gave him any check for what he did, but quietly and silently submitted to the abuse; *when he suffered, he threatened not*; but when he brought him out of the stocks, then God put a word into the prophet's mouth, which would awaken his conscience, if he had any. For when the prophet of the Lord was bound, *the word of the Lord was not*. What can we think Pashur aimed at in finiting and abusing Jeremiah? whatever it is, we shall see by what God saith to him, he is disappointed.

1. Did he aim to establish himself and make himself easy, by silencing one that told him of his faults, and would be likely to lessen his reputation with the people? he shall not gain this point; for, (1.) Though the prophet should be silent, his own conscience shall fly in his face and make him always uneasy. To confirm this, he shall have a name given him, *Magor-misabib, terror round about, or fear on every side*; God himself shall give him this name, whose calling him so, will make him so. It seems to be a proverbial expression, bespeaking a man not only in distress, but in despair; not only in danger on every side; that a man may be, and yet by faith may be in no terror, as David, Psal. lxxviii. 5. but in *fear on every side*; and that a man may be where there appears no danger; *The wicked flee when no man pursues, are in great fear where no fear is*. This shall be Pashur's case, ver. 4. *Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself*, i. e. thou shalt be subject to continual frights, and thine own fancy and imagination shall create thee a constant uneasiness. Note, God can make the most daring sinner a terror to himself; and will find out a way to frighten those that frighten his people from doing their duty. And those that will not hear of their faults from God's prophets, that are reprovers in the gate, shall be made to hear of them from conscience, which is a reprover in their own bosoms that will not be daunted or silenced. And miserable is the man that is thus made a terror to himself! Yet this is not all; some are very much a terror to themselves, but they conceal it, and seem to others to be pleasant; but *I will make thee a terror to all thy friends*; thou shalt upon all occasions, express thyself with so much horror and amazement, that all thy friends shall be afraid of conversing with thee, and shall choose to stand aloof from thy torment. Persons in deep melancholy and distraction are a terror to themselves and all about them; which is a good reason why we should be very thankful, so long as God continues to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences. (2.) His friends, whom he put a confidence in, and perhaps studied to oblige, in what he did against Jeremiah, shall all fail him. God doth not presently strike him dead for what he did against Jeremiah, but lets him live miserably, like Cain in the *land of shaming*; in such a continual condemnation, as that wherever he goes he shall be a monument of divine justice; and when it is asked, What makes this man in such a continual terror? it shall be answered, It is God's hand upon him for putting Jeremiah in the stocks. His friends, that should encourage him, shall all be cut off: they shall *fall by the sword of the enemy*, and his eyes shall behold it; which dreadful sight shall increase his terror. (3.) He shall find in the issue, his terror is not causeless, but that divine vengeance is waiting for him, ver. 6. he and his family shall *go into captivity, even to Babylon*; he shall neither die before the evil comes, as Josiah, nor live to survive it, as some did, but he shall die a captive, and shall in effect be buried in his chains, he and all his friends. Thus far is the doom of Pashur. Let persecutors read it and tremble; tremble to repentance before they be made to tremble to their ruin.

2. Did he aim to keep the people easy, to prevent the destruction that Jeremiah prophesied of, and by sinking his reputation to make his words fall to the ground? It is probable he did; for it appears by ver. 6. he did himself set up for a prophet, and told the people they should have peace; *he prophesied lies to them*, and because Jeremiah's prophecy contradicted his, and tended to awaken those whom he endeavoured to rock asleep in their sins, therefore he set himself against him. But could he gain his point? No; Jeremiah stands to what he hath said against Judah and Jerusalem; and God by his mouth repeats it. Men get nothing by silencing those who reprove and warn them, for the word will have its course; so it had here.

(1.) The country shall be ruined, ver. 4. *I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon*. It had long been God's own land, but he will now transfer his title to it to Nebuchadnezzar, he shall be master of the country, and dispose of the inhabitants; some to the sword and some to captivity, as he pleaseth, but none shall escape him.

(2.) The city shall be ruined too, ver. 5. The king of Babylon shall spoil that and carry all that is valuable in it to Babylon. 1. He shall seize their magazines and military stores, here called *the strength of this city*, and turn those against them. These they trusted to as their strength; but what stead could they stand them in, when they had thrown themselves out of God's protection, and he who was indeed their strength was departed from them? 2. He shall carry off all their stock in trade, their wares and merchandizes, here called *their labours*, because it was what they laboured about and got by their labour. 3. He shall plunder their fine houses and take away their rich furniture, here called *their precious things*, because they have secured to themselves precious things in God's precious promises, which are out of the reach of soldiers! 4. He shall rattle the exchequer, and take away the jewels of the crown, and *all the treasures of the kings of Judah*. This was that influence of the calamity, which was first of all threatened to Hezekiah long ago, as his punishment for shewing his trea-

tures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, *Jer. xxix. 6.* The treasury they thought was their defence, but that betrayed them, and became an easy prey.

7. ¶ O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. 8. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. 9. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. 10. ¶ For I heard, the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. 11. But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper; their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten. 12. But O LORD of hosts that triest the righteous, and seekest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my case. 13. Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil doers.

Pashur's doom was to be a terror to himself; Jeremiah even now, in this hour of temptation, is far from being so; and yet it cannot be denied but that he is here, through the infirmity of the flesh, at a mighty toss within himself; good men are but men at the best: God is not extreme to mark what they say and do amiss, and therefore we must not be so, but make the best of it. In these verses it appears, that upon occasion of the great indignity and injury that Pashur did to Jeremiah, there was a struggle in his breast between his graces and his corruptions. His discourse with himself and with his God upon this occasion was somewhat perplexed; let us try to methodise it.

1. Here is a sad representation of the wrong that was done him, and the affronts that were put upon him; and this representation, no doubt, was according to truth and deserves no blame, but was very justly and very fitly made to him that sent him, and, no doubt, would bear him out. He complains, (1.) That he was ridiculed and laughed at: they made a jest of every thing he said and did; and this cannot but be a great grievance to an ingenious mind, *Jer. 7, 8. I am in derision, I am mocked;* they played upon him, and made themselves and one another merry with him, as if he had been a fool, good for nothing but to make sport; this he was continually, *I was in derision daily,* thus he was universally, *every one mocks me:* the greatest sorrow is to forget their own gravity, and the meanest to forget mine. Thus our Lord Jesus on the cross was reviled both by priests and people, and the revilings of each had their peculiar aggravation. And what was it that thus exposed him to contempt and scorn? It was nothing but his faithful and zealous discharge of his office, *Jer. 8.* they could find nothing for which to deride him, but his preaching: it was the word of the Lord that was made a reproach; that for which they should have honoured and respected him, that he was intrusted to deliver the word of the Lord to them, was the very thing for which they reproached and reviled him. He never preached a sermon, but though he kept as close as possible to his instructions, they found something or other in it for which to hunter and abuse him. Note, It is sad to think, that though divine revelation be one of the greatest blessings and honours that ever was bestowed upon the world, yet it has been turned very much to the reproach of the most zealous preachers and believers of it. Two things they derided him for, 1. The manner of his preaching; *Since he spake, he cried out.* He had always been a lively affectionate preacher, and since he began to speak in God's name, he always spake as man in earnest; *he cried aloud, and did not spare,* neither spared himself, nor spared them to whom he preached; and this was enough for them to laugh at, who hated to be serious. It is common for those that are unafflicted with, and disaffected to, the things of God themselves, to ridicule those that are much affected with them. Lively preachers are the scorn of careless unbelieving hearers. (2.) The matter of his preaching; *he cried violence and spoil.* He reproved them for the violence and spoil which they were guilty of towards one another; and he prophesied of the violence and spoil which should be brought upon them, as the punishment of that sin; for the former they ridiculed him as over-precise, for the latter as over-credulous, in both he was provoking to them, and therefore they resolved to run him down. This was bad enough, yet he complains farther, (1.) That he was plotted against and his ruin contrived; he was not only ridiculed as a weak man, but reproached and misrepresented as an ill man, and dangerous to the government. This he laments as his grievance, *Jer. 10.* Being laughed at, though it touches a man in point of honour, yet it is a thing that may easily be laughed at again; for as it has been well observed, it is no shame to be laughed at, but to deserve to be so. But there were those that acted a more spiteful part, and with more subtlety. 1. They spoke ill of him behind his back, when he had no opportunity of clearing himself; and were industrious to spread false reports concerning him; *I heard at second hand the defaming of many, fear on every side, of many Magor-missabib;* so some read it; of many such men as Pashur was, and who may therefore expect his doom. Or this was the matter of their defamation, they represented Jeremiah as a man that instilled fears and jealousies on every side into the minds of the people; and so made them uneasy under the government, and disposed them to a rebellion. Or he perceived them so malicious against him, that he could not but be afraid on every side, wherever he was he had reason to fear informers; so that they made him almost a Magor-missabib. These words are found in the original, *verbatim*, the same, *Psalms xxxi. 13. I have heard the slander or defaming of many, fear on every side.* Jeremiah in his complaint chooseth to make use of the same words that David had made use of before him, that it might be a comfort to him to think that other good men had suffered the like abuses before him, and to teach us to make use of David's psalms with application to ourselves, as there is occasion. Whatever we have to say, we may from thence take with us words. See how Jeremiah's enemies contrived the matter, *Report, say they, and we will report.* They resolve to cast an odium upon

him, and this is the method they take: let some very ill thing be said of him, which may render him obnoxious to the government, and then let it be never so false we will second it, and spread it, and add to it; for the reproaches of good men lose nothing by the carrying. Do you that frame a story plausibly, or you that can pretend to some acquaintance with him, report it once, and we will all report it from you in all companies that we come into. Do you say it, and we will swear it; do you set it a-going, and we will follow it. And thus both are equally guilty, they that raise and they that propagate the false report: *The receiver is as bad as the thief.* 2. They flattered him to his face, that they might get something from him on which to ground an accusation, as the spies that came to Christ, feigning themselves to be just men, *Luke xx. 20.* and xi. 53, 54. His familiars, that he conversed freely with and put confidence in, watched for his halting, observed what he said, which they could by any strained *in-cudo* put an ill construction upon, and carried it to his enemies. His case was very sad, when those betrayed him whom he took to be his friends. They said among themselves, if we speak him fair and intimate ourselves into his acquaintance, peradventure he will be inticed to own, that he is in confederacy with the enemy, and a pensioner to the king of Babylon, or we shall wheedle him to speak some treasonable words, and then we shall prevail against him and take our revenge on him for telling us of our faults, and threatening us with the judgments of God. Note, Neither the innocence of the dove, nor the prudence of the serpent to help it, can secure men from unjust censure and false accusation.

2. Here is an account of the temptation he was in under this affliction; his feet were almost gone, as the Psalmist's, *Psalms lxxiii. 2.* And this is that which is most to be dreaded in affliction, being driven by it to sin, *Neh. vi. 13.*

(1.) He was tempted to quarrel with God for making him a prophet. This he begins with, *Jer. 7. O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived.* This, as we read it, sounds very harsh; God's servants have been always ready to own that he is a faithful Master and never cheated them, and therefore this is the language of Jeremiah's folly and corruption. If when God called him to be a prophet, and told him he would set him over the kingdoms, chap. i. 10, and make him a defence city, he flattered himself with an expectation of having universal respect paid him as a messenger from heaven, and living safe and easy, and afterwards it proved otherwise, he must not say *God had deceived him, but he had deceived himself;* for he knew how the prophets before him had been persecuted, and had no reason to expect better treatment. Nay, God had expressly told them, that all the princes, priests, and people of the land would fight against him, chap. i. 19, which he had forgot, else he would not have laid the blame on God thus. Christ thus told his disciples what opposition they should meet with, *that they might not be offended,* John xvi. 1, 2. But the word may, very well be read thus, *Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded,* it is the same word that was used, *Gen. ix. 27.* margin, *God shall persuade Joseph.* And *Prov. xxv. 13. By much forbearance is a prince persuaded.* And *Hos. ii. 14. I will allure her.* And this agrees best with what follows, *thou wast stronger than I, dost overpower me with argument;* may dost overpower me by the influence of thy Spirit upon me, and thou hast prevailed. Jeremiah was very backward to undertake the prophetic office, he pleaded that he was under age and unfit for the service; but God over-ruled his pleas, and told him *he must go,* chap. i. 6, 7. Now, Lord, saith he, since thou hast put this office upon me, why dost thou not stand by me in it? Had I thrust myself upon it, I might justly have been in derision, but why am I to whom thou dost thrust me into it? It was Jeremiah's infirmity to complain thus of God, as putting a hardship upon him in calling him to be a prophet, which he would not have done had he considered the lasting honour thereby done him, sufficient to balance the present contempt he was under. Note, As long as we live ourselves in the way of God and duty, it is weakness and folly, when we meet with difficulties and discouragements in it, to wish we had never set out in it.

(2.) He was tempted to quit his work and give it over, partly because he himself met with so much hardship in it, and partly because those whom he was sent, instead of being edified and made better, were alienated and made worse, *Jer. 9. Then I said, since by prophesying in the name of the Lord I gain nothing to him or myself but dishonour and disgrace, I will not make mention of him,* as my author for any thing I say, nor speak any more in his name: since my enemies do all they can to silence me, I will even silence myself and speak no more, since I had as good speak to the stone as to them. Note, It is a strong temptation to poor sinners, to resolve they will preach no more, when they see their preaching slighted, and wholly ineffectual. But let people dread putting their minister into this temptation. Let not their labour be in vain with us, lest we provoke them to say they will take no more pains with us, and provoke God to say, they shall take no more. Yet let not ministers hearken to this temptation, but go on in their duty, notwithstanding their discouragements, for this is the more thankworthy; and though *Israel be not gathered,* yet they should be glorious.

3. Here is an account of his faithful adherence to his work, and cheerful dependence on God notwithstanding.

(1.) He found the grace of God mighty to keep him to his business, notwithstanding the temptation he was in to throw it up. *I said, in my haste, I will speak no more in his name,* what I have in my heart to deliver I will suppress; but I soon found it was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, which glowed inwardly and must have vent, it was impossible to smother it; I was like a man in a burning fever, uneasy and in a continual toss, while I kept silence from God my heart was hot within me, it was pain and grief to me, and I must speak that I may be refreshed, *Psalms xxxix. 2, 3. Job xxxii. 20. While I kept silence my bones waxed old,* *Psalms xxxii. 3.* See the power of the spirit of prophecy in those that were acted by it; and thus will a holy zeal for God even eat men up, and make them forget themselves: *I believed, therefore have I spoken.* Jeremiah was soon weary with forbearing to preach, and could not contain himself; nothing puts faithful ministers to pain so much as being silenced, nor to terror so much as silencing themselves. Their convictions will soon triumph over temptations of that kind; for *woe is it unto me if I preach not the gospel,* whatever it cost me! *1 Cor. ix. 16.* And it is really a mercy to have the Word of God thus mighty in us to overpower our corruptions.

2. He was assured of God's presence with him, which would be sufficient to baffle all the attempts of his enemies against him, *Jer. 11. They say, we shall prevail against him, the day will undoubtedly be our own; but I am sure they shall not prevail, they shall not prosper,* I can safely set them all at defiance, for the Lord is with me, is on my side, to take my part against them, *Rom. viii. 31.* to protect me from all their malicious designs upon me; He is with me to support me and bear me up under the burden which now presseth me down: He is with me to make the word I preach answer the end he designs, though not the end I desire: He is with me as a mighty terrible one, to strike a terror upon them and so to overcome them. Note, Even that in God which is terrible, is really comfortable to his servants that trust in him, for it shall be turned against those that seek to terrify his people. God's being a mighty God, speaks him a terrible God to all those that take up arms against him, or any that, like Jeremiah, was commissioned by him.

How

How terrible will the wrath of God be to all those that think to daunt all about them, and will themselves be daunted by nothing! The most formidable enemies that act against us appear despicable, when we see the Lord for us as a mighty terrible one, Neh. ix. 14. Jeremiah speaks now with a good assurance, if the Lord be with me my persecutors shall stumble, so that when they pursue me they shall not overtake me, *Psal. xxvii. 2.* and then they shall be greatly ashamed of their impotent malice and fruitless attempts. Nay, their everlasting confusion and infamy shall never be forgotten; they shall not forget it themselves, but it shall be to them a constant and lasting vexation whenever they think of it; others shall not forget it, but it shall leave them an indelible reproach.

(3.) He appeals to God against them as a righteous Judge, and prays judgment upon his cause, *ver. 12.* He looks upon God as the God that tries the righteous, takes cognizance of them and of every cause they are interested in: He doth not judge in favour of them with partiality, but tries them, and finding they have right on their side, and their persecutors wrong them and are injurious to them, he gives sentence for them. Like that tries the righteous tries the unrighteous too, and he is very well qualified to do both. For he sees the reins and the heart, he certainly knows men's thoughts and affections, their reins and intentions, and therefore can pass an unerring judgment on their words and actions. Now this is the God, (1.) To whom the prophet here refers himself, and in whose court he lodgeth his appeal: *Unto thee have I opened my cause.* Not but that God perfectly knew his cause and all the merits of it without his opening; but the cause we commit to God we must spread before him, he knows it, but he will know it from us; and allows us to be particular in the opening of it, not to affect him, but to affect ourselves. Note, It will be an ease to our spirits when we are oppressed and burdened to open our cause to God, and pour out our complaints before him. (2.) By whom he expects to be righted: *Let me see thy vengeance on them;* such vengeance as thou thinkest fit to take for their conviction and my vindication; the vengeance thou useth to take on persecutors. Note, Whatever injuries are done us, we must not study to avenge ourselves, but must leave it to that God to do it to whom vengeance belongs, and who hath said, *I will repay.*

(4.) He greatly rejoiceth and praiseth God in a full confidence that God would appear for his deliverance, *ver. 13.* so full is he of the comfort of God's presence with him, and the divine protection he is under, and the divine promise he has to depend upon, that in a transport of joy he sings up himself and others to give God the glory of it: *Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord.* Here appears a great change with him since he began this discourse; the clouds are blown over, his complaints all silenced and turned into thanksgivings. He has now an entire confidence in that God, whom, *ver. 7.* he was distrusting; sings up himself to praise that name, which, *ver. 9.* he was resolving no more to make mention of. It was the lively exercise of faith that made this happy change, and turned his sighs into songs, and his tremblings into triumphs. It is proper to express our hope in God by our praising him, and our praising God by our singing to him. That which is the matter of the praise is, *He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of the evil-doers;* he means especially himself, his own poor soul. He hath delivered me formerly when I was in distress, and now of late out of the hand of Pashur, and he will continue to deliver me, *2 Cor. i. 10.* He will deliver my soul from the sin that I am in danger of falling into, when I am thus persecuted. He hath delivered me from the hand of evil-doers: so that they have not gained their point, nor had their will. Note, Those that are faithful in well-doing need not fear those that are spiteful in evil-doing, for they have a God to trust to, who has well-doers under the hand of his protection, and evil-doers under the hand of his restraint.

14. ¶ *Curfed be the day wherein I was born:* let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. 15. *Curfed be the man who brought tidings to my father,* saying, A man-child is born unto thee: making him very glad. 16. And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noon-tide; 17. Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. 18. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

What is the meaning of this? Doth there proceed out of the same mouth blessing and cursing? Could he that said so cheerfully, *ver. 13. Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord,* say so passionately, *ver. 14. Curfed be the day wherein I was born?* How shall we reconcile these? What we have in these verses I suppose the prophet records to his own shame, as he had recorded that in the foregoing verses to God's glory. It seems to be a relation of the toils he had been in while he was in the stocks, out of which by faith and hope he had recovered himself, rather than a new temptation which he afterwards fell into, and it should come in like that of David, *Psal. xxxi. 22. I said in my haste, I am cut off.* Which is also implied, *Psal. lxxvii. 7.* When grace has got the victory it is good to remember the struggles of corruption, that we may be ashamed of ourselves and our own folly, may admire the goodness of God in not taking us at our word, and may be warned by it to double our guard upon our spirits another time. See here how strong the temptation was which the prophet, by divine assistance, got the victory over, and how far he yielded to it, that we may not despair, if we through the weakness of the flesh be at any time thus tempted. Let us see here,

1. What the prophet's language was in this temptation.

(1.) He fastened a brand of infamy upon his birth-day, as Job did in a heat, *chap. iii. 1. Curfed be the day wherein I was born.* It was an ill day to me, *ver. 14.* because it was the beginning of sorrows, and an in-let to all this misery. It is a wish that he had never been born. Judas in hell had reason to wish so, *Matth. xxvi. 24.* but no man on earth has reason to wish so, because he knows not but he may yet become a vessel of mercy, much less has any good man reason to wish so. Whereas some keep their birth-day in the return of the year with gladness, he will look upon his birth-day as a melancholy day, and will solemnize it with sorrow, and will have it looked upon as an ominous day.

(2.) He wished ill to the messenger that brought his father the news of his birth, *ver. 15.* It made his father very glad to hear that he had a child born (perhaps it was his first-born) especially that it was a man-child, for then being of the family of the priests, he might live to have the honour of serving God's altar; and yet he is ready to curse the man that brought him the tidings, when perhaps the father to whom they were brought gave him a gratuity for it. Here Mr. Gataker well observes, "That parents are often

"much rejoiced at the birth of their children, when if they did foresee what misery they are born to, they would rather lament over them, than rejoice in them." He is very free and very fierce in the curses he pronounces upon the messenger of his birth, *ver. 16. Let him be as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord utterly overthrew, and repeated not, i. e.* did not in the least mitigate or alleviate their misery: *Let him hear the cry of the invading besieging enemy in the morning,* as soon as he is stirring, then let him take the alarm, and by noon let him hear their shouting for victory. And thus let him live in constant terror.

(3.) He is angry that the fate of the Hebrews' children in Egypt was not his, that he was not slain from the womb, that his first breath was not made his last, and that he was not strangled as soon as he came into the world, *ver. 17.* He wisheth the messenger of his birth had been better employed, and had been his murderer; nay, that his mother of whom he was born, had been, to her great misery, always with child of him; and so the womb in which he was conceived, would have served, without more ado, as a grave for him to be buried in: and Job intimates a near alliance and resemblance between the womb and the grave, *Job i. 21. Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither.*

(4.) He thinks his present calamities sufficient to justify these passionate wishes, *ver. 18. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb?* where I lay hid, was not seen, was not hated, where I lay safe and knew no evil, to see all this labour and sorrow, nay, to have my days consumed with shame, to be continually vexed and abused; not only to have my life spent in trouble, but wasted and worn away by trouble?

2. What use we may make of this. It is not recorded for our imitation, and yet we may learn good lessons from it.

1. See the vanity of human life, and the vexation of spirit that attends it. If there were not another life after this, we should be tempted many a time to wish we had never known this, for our few days here are full of trouble.

2. See the folly and absurdity of sinful passion, how unreasonably it talks when it is suffered to ramble. What nonsense is it to curse a day? to curse a messenger for the sake of his message? What a brutish, barbarous thing, for a child to wish his own mother had never been delivered of him? See *Isa. xlv. 10.* We can easily see the folly of it in others, and should take warning from thence to suppress all such intemperate heats and passions in ourselves, to stille them at first, and not to suffer their evil spirits to speak. When the heart is hot, let the tongue be bridled, *Psal. xxxix. 1. 2.*

3. See the weakness even of good men, who are but men at the best: See how much those who think they stand, are concerned to take heed lest they fall, and to pray daily, Father in heaven, lead us not into temptation.

C H A P XXI.

It is plain that the prophecies of this book are not placed here in the same order that they were preached: for there are chapters after this which concern Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim, and Jeconiah, who all reigned before Zedekiah, in whose reign the prophecy of this chapter bears date. Here is, (1.) The message which Zedekiah sent to the prophet, to desire him to enquire of the Lord for them, *ver. 1. 2.* (2.) The answer which Jeremiah, in God's name, sent to that message; in which he, (1.) Foretells the certain and inevitable ruin of the city, and the fruitlessness of their attempts for its preservation, *ver. 3—7.* (2.) He adviseth the people to make the best of bad, by going over to the king of Babylon, *ver. 8—10.* (3.) He adviseth the king and his family to repent and reform, *ver. 11, 12.* and not to trust to the strength of their city and grow secure, *ver. 13, 14.*

1. THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent unto him. Pashur, the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying, 2. Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us (for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us) if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wonderful works, that he may go up from us. 3. ¶ Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah: 4. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city. 5. And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand, and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. 6. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence. 7. And afterwards saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

Here is, 1. A very humble decent message which king Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah the prophet when he was in distress. It is indeed charged upon this Zedekiah, that he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord, *2 Chron. xxxvi. 12.* he did not always humble himself as he did sometimes; never humbled himself till necessity forced him to it; he humbled himself so far as to desire the prophet's assistance, but not so far as to take his advice or be ruled by him. Observe,

1. The distress which king Zedekiah was now in: Nebuchadrezzar made war upon him, not only invaded the land, but besieged the city, and now actually invested it. Note, Those that put the evil day far from them, will be the more terrified when it comes upon them: and they who before slighted God's ministers, may then perhaps be glad to court an acquaintance with them.

2. The messengers he sent, Pashur and Zephaniah, one of the 5th course of the priests, the other of the 24th, *1 Chron. xxiv. 9—18.* It was well that he sent, that he sent persons of rank; but it had been better if he had desired a personal conference with the prophet, which no doubt he might easily

easily have had if he would so far have *humbled himself*. Perhaps these priests were no better than the rest, and yet when they were commanded by the king, they must carry a respectful message to the prophet, which was both a mortification to them and an honour to Jeremiah. He had rashly said, *chap. xx. 18. My days are consumed with shame*, and yet here we find that he lived to see better days than those were when he made that complaint; now he appears in reputation. Note, It is folly to say when things are bad with us, they will always be so. It is possible that those that are despised may come to be respected; and it is promised, that those who *honour God. He will honour*, and those who have *afflicted his people shall bow to them*, *Isa. lx. 14.*

3. The message itself, *Enquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us*, *ver. 2.* Now the Chaldean army was got into their borders, into their bowels, they were at length convinced that Jeremiah was a true prophet, though loth to own it, and brought too late to it. Under this conviction they desire him to stand their friend with God, believing him to have that interest in heaven which none of their other prophets had that had flattered them with hopes of peace. They now employ Jeremiah, (1.) To consult the mind of God for them, *Enquire of the Lord for us*; ask him what course we shall take in our present state, for the measures we have hitherto taken are all broke. Note, Those that will not take the direction of God's grace, how to get clear of their sins, would yet be glad of the directions of his providence, how to get clear of their troubles. (2.) To seek the favour of God for them: So some read it, *intreat the Lord for us*; be an intercessor for us with God. Note, Those that slight the prayers of God's people and ministers when they are in prosperity, may perhaps be glad of an interest in them when they come to be in distress. *Give us of your oil*: The benefit they promise themselves is, *It may be the Lord will deal with us now according to the wonderful works he wrought for our fathers*, that the enemy may raise the siege, and go up from us. Observe, (1.) All their care is to get rid of their trouble; not to make their peace with God, and be reconciled to him: that our enemy may go up from us; not that our God may return to us. Thus Pharaoh, *Exod. x. 17. Intreat the Lord that he may take away this death*. (2.) All their hope is, that God hath done wonderful works formerly in the deliverance of Jerusalem when Sennacherib besieged it, at the prayer of Isaiah: so we are told, *2 Chron. xxxii. 20, 21.* and who can tell but he may destroy these besiegers (as he did those) at the prayer of Jeremiah? But they did not consider how different the character of Zedekiah and his people was from that of Hezekiah and his people: Those were days of general reformation and piety, these of general corruption and apostacy. Jerusalem is now the reverse of what it was then. Note, It is folly to think that God should do for us while we hold fast our iniquity, as he did for those that held fast their integrity.

4. A very startling cutting reply, which God, by the prophet, sent to that message. If Jeremiah had been to have answered the message of himself, we have reason to think he would have returned a comfortable answer, in hopes their sending such a message was an indication of some good purposes in them, which he would be glad to make the best of, for he did not desire the woeful day. But God knows their hearts better than Jeremiah doth, and sends them an answer which hath scarce one word of comfort in it. He sends it them in the name of the *Lord God of Israel*, *ver. 3.* to intimate to them, that though God allowed himself to be called the *God of Israel*, and had done great things for Israel formerly, and had still great things in store for Israel, pursuant to his covenants with them, yet this should stand the present generation in no stead, who were Israelites in name only, and not in deed, no more than God's dealings with them should cut off his relation to Israel as their God. It is here foretold,

1. That God will render all their endeavours for their own security fruitless and ineffectual, *ver. 4. I will be so far from teaching your hands, to war, and putting an edge upon your swords, that I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hand*, when you fall out in on the besiegers to beat them off, so that they shall not give the stroke you design; nay, they shall recoil into your own faces and be turned upon yourselves. Nothing can make for those who have God against them.

2. That the besiegers shall in a little time make themselves masters of Jerusalem, and of all its wealth and strength. *I will assemble them in the midst of the city*, that are now surrounding it. Note, If that place which should have been a centre of devotion be made a centre of wickedness, it is no strange if God make it a rendezvous of destroyers.

3. That God himself will be their enemy, and then I know not who can befriend them, no, not Jeremiah himself, *ver. 5. I will be so far from protecting you, as I have done formerly in a like case, that I myself will fight against you*. Note, Those who rebel against God may justly expect that he will make war upon them. And that, (1.) With the power of a God who is irresistibly victorious. *I will fight against you with an out-stretched hand*, which will reach far, and *with a strong arm*, which will strike home, and wound deep. (2.) With the displeasure of a God, which is indisputably righteous. It is not a concision in love, but an execution in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath: it is upon a sentence sworn in wrath, against which there will be no exception: and it will soon be found what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

4. That those who for their own safety decline falling out upon the besiegers, and so avoid their sword, yet shall not escape the sword of God's justice, *ver. 6. I will smite those that abide in the city* (so it may be read) *both man and beast*; both the beasts that are for food, and those that are for service in war, foot and horse, *they shall die of a great pestilence*, which shall rage within the walls, while the enemies are encamped about them. Though Jerusalem's gates and walls may for a time keep out the Chaldeans, they cannot keep out God's judgments. His arrows of pestilence can reach those that think themselves safe from other arrows.

5. That the king himself and all the people that escape the sword, famine, and pestilence, shall fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, who shall cut them off in cold blood, *ver. 7. They shall not spare them, nor have pity on them*. Let them not expect to find mercy with men that have forfeited God's compassions, and shut themselves out from his mercy. Thus was the decree gone forth, and then to what purpose was it for Jeremiah to enquire of the Lord for them?

8. ¶ And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. 9. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. 10. For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. 11. ¶ And

touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the LORD; 12. O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. 13. Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations? 14. But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

By the civil message which the king sent to Jeremiah, it appeared that both he and the people began to have a respect for him, which it had been Jeremiah's policy to make some advantage of for himself; but the reply which God obligeth him to make is enough to crush that little respect they begin to have for him, and to exasperate them against him more than ever. Not only the predictions in the foregoing verses were provoking, but the prescriptions in these verses: For here,

1. He adviseth the people to surrender and desert to the Chaldeans, as the only means left them to save their lives, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* This counsel was very displeasing to those who were flattered by their false prophets into a desperate resolution to hold out to the last extremity, trusting to the strength of their walls and courage of their soldiery to keep out the enemy, or to their foreign aids to raise the siege. The prophet assures them *the city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon*, and he shall not only plunder it, but burn it with fire, for God himself hath set his face against this city for evil, and not for good, to lay it waste, and not to protect it; for evil which shall have no good mixed with it, no mitigation or merciful allay: and therefore if you would make the best of bad you must beg quarter of the Chaldeans, and surrender prisoners of war. In vain did Rabshakeh persuade the Jews to do this while they had God for them, *Isa. xxxvi. 16.* but it was the best course they could take now God was against them. Both the law and the prophets had often set before them life and death in another sense: Life if they obey the voice of God, death if they persist in disobedience, *Deut. xxx. 19.* But they had slighted that life which would have made them truly happy, to upbraid them with which the prophet here useth the same expression, *ver. 9. Behold I set before you the way of life and the way of death*, which speaks not as that, a fair proposal, but a melancholy dilemma, advising them of two evils to choose the least; and that lesser evil, a shameful and wretched captivity, is all the life now left for them to propose to themselves. He that abides in the city, and trusts to that to secure him, shall certainly die either by the sword with out the walls, or famine or pestilence within. But he that can so far bring down his spirit and quit his vain hopes, as to go out and fall to the Chaldeans, his life shall be given him for a prey, i. e. he shall save his life, but with much difficulty and hazard, as a prey is taken from the mighty. It is an expression like that, *he shall be saved yet so as by fire*. He shall escape but very narrowly: or he shall have such a surprising joy and satisfaction in escaping with his life from such an universal destruction, as shall equal their's that divide the spoil. They thought to have made a prey of the camp of the Chaldeans, as their ancestors did that of the Assyrians, *Isa. xxxiii. 23.* but they will be sadly disappointed; if by yielding at discretion they can but save their lives, that is all the prey they must promise themselves. Now one would think this advice from a prophet in God's name should have gained some credit with them, and been universally followed; but for ought appears there were few or none that took it; so wretchedly were their hearts hardened to their destruction.

2. He adviseth the king and princes to reform, and make conscience of the duty of their place. Because it was the king that sent the message to him, in the reply there shall be a particular word for the house of the king, not to compliment or court them, that was no part of a prophet's business, no not when they did him the honour to send to him, but to give them wholesome counsel, *ver. 11, 12. Execute judgment in the morning*; do it carefully and diligently. Those magistrates that would fill up their place with duty, had need rise betimes. Do it quickly, and do not delay to do justice upon appeals made to you, and tire out poor petitioners as you have done. Do not lie in your beds in a morning to sleep away the debauch of the night before, nor spend the morning in pampering the body, as those princes, *Eccles. x. 16.* but spend it in the dispatch of business. You would be delivered out of the hand of those that distress you, and expect that therein God should do you justice, see then that you do justice to those that apply themselves to you, and deliver them out of the hand of their oppressors, lest my fury go out like fire against you in a particular manner, and you fare worst, who think to escape best, because of the evil of your doings. Now, (1.) This intimates that it was their neglect to do their duty that brought all this desolation upon the people. It was the evil of their doings that kindled the fire of God's wrath. Thus plainly doth he deal even with the house of the king: for those that would have the benefit of a prophet's prayers must thankfully take a prophet's reproofs. (2.) This directs them to take the right method for a national reformation: The princes must begin and set a good example, and then the people will be invited to reform. They must use their power for the punishment of wrong, and then the people will be obliged to reform. He minds them that they are the house of David, and therefore should tread in his steps, who executed judgment and justice to his people. (3.) This gives them some encouragement to hope that there may yet be a lengthening of their tranquillity, *Dan. iv. 27.* If any thing will recover their state from the brink of ruin this will.

3. He shews them the vanity of all their hopes so long as they continued unreformed, *ver. 13, 14.* Jerusalem is an inhabitant of the valley, guarded with mountains on all sides, which were their natural fortifications, making it difficult for an army to approach them. It is a rock of the plain, which made it difficult for an army to undermine them. These advantages of their situation they trusted to more than to the power and promise of God: and thinking their city by these means to be impregnable, they set the judgments of God at defiance, saying, *Who shall come down against us?* None of our neighbours dare make a descent upon us; or if they do, *Who shall enter into our habitations?* They had some colour for this confidence; for it appears to have been the sense of all their neighbours that no enemy could force his way into Jerusalem, *Lam. iv. 12.* But those are least safe that are most secure. God soon shews the vanity of that challenge, *Who shall come down against us?* when he saith, *ver. 13. Behold, I am against thee.* They had indeed by their wickedness driven God out of their city, when he would have tarried with them as a friend; but they could not by their bulwarks keep him out of their city when he came against them as an enemy. If God be for us, who can be against us? but if he be against us, who can be

for us, to stand us in any stead? Nay, he comes against them not as an enemy that may lawfully and with some hope of success be resisted, but as a judge that cannot be resisted; for he saith, *ver. 14. I will punish you*, by due course of law, according to the fruit of your doings, i. e. according to the merit of them and the direct tendency of them. That shall be brought upon you which is the natural product of sin: Nay, he will not only come with the anger of an enemy and the justice of a judge, but with the force of a consuming fire, which has no compassion, as a judge sometimes has, nor spares any thing combustible that comes in its way. Jerusalem is become a forest, in which God will kindle a fire that shall consume all before it; for our God is himself a consuming fire, and who is able to stand in his sight when once he is angry?

C H A P. XXII.

Upon occasion of the message sent in the foregoing chapter to the house of the king, we have here recorded some sermons which Jeremiah preached at court, in some preceding reigns, that it might appear they had had fair warning long before that fatal sentence was pronounced upon them, and were put in a way to have prevented it. Here is, (1.) A message sent to the royal family, as it should seem, in the reign of Jehoiakim, relating partly to Jehoiakim, who was carried away captive into Egypt, and partly to Jehoiakim who succeeded him, and was now upon the throne. The king and princes are exhorted to execute judgment, and are assured that if they did so, the royal family should flourish, but otherwise it should be ruined, *ver. 1—10. Jehoiakim, called here Shallum, is lamented, ver. 10—12. Jehoiakim is reproved and threatened, ver. 13—19. (2.) Another message sent them in the reign of Jehoiachin, alias Seconiah, the son of Jehoiakim. He is charged with an obstinate refusal to hear, threatened with destruction, and it is foretold that in him Solomon's house should fail, ver. 20—30.*

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, 2. And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates: 3. Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor; and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. 4. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. 5. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation. 6. For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited. 7. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire. 8. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city? 9. Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

Here is, 1. Orders given to Jeremiah to go preach before the king. In the chapter before, Zedekiah sent messengers to the prophet, but here the prophet is bidden to go in his own proper person to the house of the king, and demand his attention to the word of the King of kings, *ver. 2. Hear the word of the Lord O king of Judah.* Subjects must own, that where the word of a king is, there is power over them, but kings must own, that where the word of the Lord is, there is power over them. The king of Judah is here spoken to, as sitting upon the throne of David, who was a man after God's own heart, as holding their dignity and power by the covenant made with him; let them therefore conform to this example, that they may have the benefit of the promises made to him. With the king his servants are spoken to, because a good government depends upon a good ministry as well as a good king.

2. Instructions given him what to preach.

1. He must tell them what was their duty, what was the good which the Lord their God required of them, *ver. 3.* They must take care, (1.) That they do all the good they can with the power they have. They must do justice in defence of those that were injured, and must deliver the spoiled out of the hand of their oppressors. This was the duty of their place, *Psal. lxxii. 3.* Herein they must be ministers of God for good. (2.) That they do no hurt with it, no wrong, no violence. That is the greatest wrong and violence which is done under colour of law and justice, and by those whose business it is to punish and protect from wrong and violence. They must do no wrong to the stranger, fatherless, and widow, for these God doth in a particular manner patronise, and take under his tuition, *Exod. xxii. 21, 22.*

2. He must assure them that the faithful discharge of their duty would advance and secure their prosperity, *ver. 4.* There shall then be a succession of kings, an uninterrupted succession upon the throne of David, and of his line: these enjoying a perfect tranquillity, and living in great state and dignity, riding on chariots and horses, as before, *chap. xvii. 25.* Note, The most effectual way to preserve the dignity of the government, is to do the duty of it.

3. He must likewise assure them that the iniquity of their family, if they persisted in it, would be the ruin of their family, though it was a royal family, *ver. 5.* If ye will not hear, will not obey, this house shall become a desolation, the palace of the kings of Judah shall fare no better than other habitations of Jerusalem. Sin has often been the ruin of royal palaces, though never so stately, never so strong. This sentence is ratified by an oath, I swear by myself (and God can swear by no greater, *Heb. vi. 12.*) that this house shall be laid in ruins. Note, Sin will be the ruin of the houses of princes as well as of mean men.

4. He must shew how fatal their wickedness would be to their kingdom as well as to themselves, to Jerusalem especially, the royal city, *ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.* (1.) It is confessed that Judah and Jerusalem had been valuable in God's eyes, and considerable in their own: Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon. Their lot was cast in a place that was rich and pleasant as Gilead, Zion was a strong hold, as stately as Lebanon: This they trusted to as their security. But, (2.) This shall not protect them: the country that is now fruitful as Gilead shall be made a wilderness. The cities that are now strong as Lebanon shall be cities not inhabited; and when the country is laid waste the cities shall be dispeopled. See how easily God's judgments can ruin a nation, and how certainly sin will do it.

When this desolating work is to be done, (1.) There shall be those that shall do it effectually, *ver. 7. I will prepare destroyers against thee*, I will sanctify them, so the word is; I will appoint them to this service and use them in it. Note, When destruction is designed destroyers are prepared, and perhaps are in the preparing; and things are working towards the designed destruction, and are getting ready for it long before. And who can contend with destroyers of God's preparing? They shall destroy cities as easily as men fell trees in a forest. They shall cut down thy choice cedars, and yet when they are down shall value them no more than thorns and briars, they shall cast them into the fire, for their choicest cedars are become rotten ones and good for nothing else. (2.) There shall be those who shall be ready to justify God in the doing of it, *ver. 8, 9.* Persons of many nations, when they pass by the ruins of this city in their travels, will ask, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this city? How came so strong a city to be overpowered? So rich a city to be impoverished? So populous a city to be depopulated? So holy a city to be profaned? And a city that had been so dear to God to be abandoned by him? And the reason is so obvious that it shall be ready in every man's mouth: ask them that go by the way, *Job xxi. 29.* Ask the next man you meet and he will tell you it was because they changed their gods, which other nations never used to do. They forsook the covenant of Jehovah their own God, revolted from their allegiance to him, and from the duty which their covenant with him bound them to, and they worshipped other gods, and served them in contempt of him, and therefore he gave them up to this destruction. Note, God never calls any off until they first cast him off. Go, saith God to the prophet, and preach this to the royal family.

10. ¶ Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. 11. For thus saith the LORD touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place; He shall not return thither any more: 12. But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more. 12. ¶ Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; 14. That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. 15. Shalt thou reign, because thou clovest/hysel/ in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? 16. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD. 17. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. 18. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, ah his glory! 19. He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Kings, though they are gods to us, they are men to God, and shall die like men; so it appears in those verses where we have a sentence of death passed upon two kings that reigned successively in Jerusalem, two brothers, and both the ungracious sons of a very pious father.

1. Here is the doom of Shallum, who doubtless is the same with Jehoahaz, for he is that son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned in the stead of Josiah his father, *ver. 11.* which Jehoahaz did by the act of the people who made him king, though he was not the eldest son, *2 Kings xxiii. 30. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 1.* Among the sons of Josiah, *1 Chron. iii. 15.* there is one Shallum mentioned, and not Jehoahaz. Perhaps the people preferred him before his elder brother, because they thought him a more active daring young man, and fitter to rule: but God soon shewed them the folly of their injustice, and that it could not prosper, for within three months the king of Egypt came upon him, deposed him, and carried him away prisoner into Egypt, as God had threatened, *Deut. xxviii. 68.* It doth not appear that any of the people were taken into captivity with him, but himself only. We have the story, *2 Kings xxiii. 34. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 4.* Now here,

(1.) The people are directed to lament him rather than his father Josiah, weep not for the dead, weep not any more for Josiah; Jeremiah had been himself a true mourner for him, and had stirred up the people to mourn for him, *2 Chron. xxxv. 25.* yet now he will have them go out of mourning for him, though it was but three months after his death, and to turn their tears into another channel, they must weep sore for Jehoahaz that is gone into Egypt, not that there was any great loss of him to the public, as there was of his father, but that his case was much more deplorable. Josiah went to the grave in peace and honour, was prevented from seeing the evil to come in this world, and removed to see the good to come in the other world; and therefore weep not for him, but for his unhappy son that is likely to live and die in disgrace and misery, a wretched captive. Note, Dying saints may be justly envied whilst living sinners are justly pitied. And so dismal perhaps the prospect of the time, may be, that tears even for a Josiah, even for a Jesus, must be restrained, that they may be reserved for ourselves and for our children, *Luke xxiii. 28.*

(2.) The reason given is, because he shall never return out of captivity, as he and his people expected, but shall die there. They were loth to believe

live this, therefore it is repeated here again and again, he shall return no more, ver. 10. He shall never have the pleasure of seeing his native country, but shall have the continual grief of hearing of the desolations of it. He is gone forth out of this place, and shall never return, ver. 11. *He shall die in the place whither they have led him captive*, ver. 12. This came of his forsaking the good example of his father, and usurping the right of his elder brother. In Ezekiel's lamentation for the princes of Israel, this Jehoiakim is represented as a young lion that soon learned to catch the prey, but was taken and brought in chains to Egypt, and was long expected to return, but in vain. See *Ezek. xix. 3, 4, 5*.

2. Here is the doom of Jehoiakim who succeeded him. Whether he had any better right to the crown than Shallum we know not: for though he was elder than his predecessor, there seems to be another son of Josiah elder than he, called Johanan, *1 Chron. iii. 15*. But this we know, he ruled no better, and fared no better at last. Here is,

1. His sins faithfully reprov'd. It is not fit for a private person to say to a king, *Thou art wicked*, but a prophet that has a message from God, betrays his trust if he do not deliver it, be it never so unpleasant, even to kings themselves. Jehoiakim is not here charged with idolatry, and probably he had not yet put Urijah the prophet to death, as we find afterwards he did, *chap. xxvi. 22, 23*. for then he would have been told of it here: but the crimes for which he is here reprov'd, are, (1.) Pride and affectation of pomp and splendour; as if all the business of a king were to look great, and to do good were to be the least of his care. He must build him a stately palace, a wide house and large chambers, ver. 14. He must have windows cut out after the newest fashion, perhaps like fashion-windows with us. The rooms must be *cedled with cedar*, the richest sort of wood. His house must be as well roofed and wainscotted as the temple itself, or else it will not please him, *1 Kings vi. 15, 16*. Nay, it must exceed that, for it must be painted with *minium or vermilion*, which dyes red, or as some read it, with *indigo*, which dyes blue. No doubt it is lawful for princes and great men to build, and beautify, and furnish their houses, so as is agreeable to their dignity; but he that knows what is in man knew that Jehoiakim did this in the pride of his heart, which makes that to be sinful, exceeding sinful, which is in itself lawful. Those therefore that are enlarging their houses and making them more sumptuous, have need to look well to the frame of their own spirits in the doing of it, and carefully to watch against all the workings of vain glory. But that which was particularly amiss in Jehoiakim's case was, that he did this when he could not but perceive both by the word of God and by his providence that divine judgments were breaking in upon him. He reigned his three first years by the permission and allowance of the king of Egypt, and all the rest by the permission and allowance of the king of Babylon; and yet he that was no better than a viceroy will covet to vie with the greatest monarchs in building and furniture. Observe how peremptory he is in this resolution, *I will build me a wide house*, I am resolv'd *I will*, whoever advises me to the contrary. Note, It is the common folly of those that are sinking in their estates to covet to make a fair shew. Many have unhumbl'd hearts under humbling providences, and look most haughty then when God is bringing them down. This is striving with our Maker. (2.) Carnal security and confidence in his wealth, depending upon the continuance of his prosperity, as if his mountain now stood so strong that it could never be moved. He thought he must reign without any disturbance or interruption, because he had *closed himself in cedar*, ver. 15. as if that were too fine to be assaulted, and too strong to be broken through, and as if God himself could not for pity give up such a stately house as that to be burned. Thus when Christ spoke of the destruction of the temple, his disciples came to him to shew him what a magnificent structure it was, *Mat. xxiii. 38*, and *xxiv. 1*. Note, Those wretchedly deceive themselves that think their present prosperity is a lasting security, and dream of reigning, because they are *inclosed in cedar*. It is but in his own conceit that the rich man's wealth is his strong city. (3.) Some think he is here charged with sacrilege and robbing the house of God to beautify and adorn his own house. He *cuts him out my windows*, so it is in the margin; which some understand as if he had taken windows out of the temple to put into his own palace, and then painted them (as it follows) with vermilion that it might look of a piece with his own building. Note, Those cheat themselves and ruin themselves at last, that think to enrich themselves by robbing God and his house; and however they may disguise it, God discovers it. (4.) He is here charged with extortion and oppression, violence and injustice. He *built his house by unrighteousness*, i. e. with money unjustly got, and materials which were not honestly come by, and perhaps upon ground obtained as Ahab obtained Naboth's vineyard. And because he went beyond what he could afford, he defrauded his workmen of their wages, which is one of the sins that *cries in the ears of the Lord of hosts*, James v. 4. God takes notice of the wrong done by the greatest men to their poor servants and labourers, and will repay them in justice that will not in justice pay those whom they employ, but *use their neighbours' service without wages*. Observe, The greatest of men must look upon the meanest as their neighbours and be to them accordingly, and love them as themselves. Jehoiakim was oppressive, not only in his buildings, but in the administration of his government. He did not do justice, made no conscience of shedding innocent blood, when it was to serve the purposes of his ambition, avarice and revenge. He was all for oppression and violence; not to threaten it only but to do it; and when he was set upon any act of injustice nothing should stop him, but he would go through with it. And that which was at the bottom of all was covetousness, that love of money which is the root of all evil. *Thine eyes and thine heart are not but for covetousness*; they were for that and nothing else. Observe, In covetousness the heart walks after the eyes; it is therefore called *the lust of the eye*, *1 John ii. 15*. *Job xxxi. 7*. It is *setting the eyes upon that which is not*, *Prov. xxiii. 5*. The eyes and the heart are then for covetousness, when the aims and affections are wholly set upon the wealth of this world; and where they are so the temptation is strong to murder, oppression, and all manner of violence and villainy. (5.) That which aggravated all his sins was, that he was the son of a good father, that had left him a good example, if he would but have followed it, ver. 15, 16. *Did not thy father eat and drink?* When Jehoiakim enlarged and enlightened his house, it is probable he spoke scornfully of his father for contenting himself with such a mean and inconvenient dwelling, below the grandeur of a sovereign prince, and ridiculed him as one that had a dull fancy, a low spirit, and could not find in his heart to lay out his money, nor cared for what was fashionable: that should not serve him that served his father: but God, by the prophet, tells him that his father, though he had not the spirit of building, was a man of an excellent spirit, a better man than he, and did better for himself and his family. Those children that despise their parents' old fashions commonly come short of their real excellencies. Jeremiah tells him,

(1.) That he was directed to do his duty by his father's practice. He *did judgment and justice*; he never did wrong to any of his subjects, never oppressed them, or put any hardship upon them, but was careful to preserve all their just rights and properties: Nay, he not only did not abuse his power for the support of wrong, but he used it for the maintaining of right:

He *judged the cause of the poor and needy*, was ready to hear the cause of the meanest of his subjects and do them justice. Note, The care of magistrates must be not to support their grandeur and take their ease, but to do good; not only not to oppress the poor themselves, but to defend those that are oppressed.

(2.) That he was encouraged to do his duty by his father's prosperity. 1. God accepted him. *Was not this to know me? saith the Lord*. Did he not hereby make it to appear that he rightly knew his God and worshipped him, and consequently was known and owned of him. Note, The right knowledge of God consists in doing our duty, particularly that which is the duty of our place and station in the world. 2. He himself had the comfort of it. *Did he not eat and drink soberly and cheerfully*, so as to fit himself for his business, *for strength and not for drunkenness*, *Ecc. x. 17*. he *did eat and drink, and do judgment*, not (as perhaps Jehoiakim and his princes did) *drink and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of the afflicted*, *Prov. xxxi. 5*. He *did eat and drink*, i. e. God blessed him with great plenty, and he had the comfortable enjoyment of it himself, and gave handsome entertainments to his friends, was very hospitable and very charitable. It was Jehoiakim's pride that he had built a fine house, but Josiah's true praise that he kept a good house. Many times those have least in them of true generosity, that have the greatest affection for pomp and grandeur; for to support the extravagant expence of that, hospitality, bounty to the poor, yea and justice itself, will be pinched. It is better to live with Josiah in an old fashioned house, and do good, than live with Jehoiakim in a stately house, and leave debts unpaid. Josiah did *justice and judgment*, and then *it was well with him*, ver. 15. and it is repeated again, ver. 16. He lived very comfortably, his own subjects and all his neighbours respected him; and whatever he put his hand to prospered. Note, While we do well we may expect it will be well with us. This Jehoiakim knew, that his father found the way of duty to be the way of comfort, and yet would not tread in his steps.

Note, It should engage us to keep up religion in our day, that our godly parents kept up in theirs, and recommenced it to us from their own experience of the benefit of it. They told us that they had found the promises which godliness has of the life that now is made good to them, and that religion and piety is a friend to outward prosperity. So that we are inexcusable if we turn aside from that good way.

2. Here we have Jehoiakim's doom faithfully read, ver. 18, 19. We may suppose it was in the utmost peril of his own life, that Jeremiah here foretold the shameful death of Jehoiakim, but *Thus saith the Lord concerning him*, and therefore thus saith he: (1.) He shall die unlamented: he shall make himself so odious by his oppression and cruelty, that all about him shall be glad to part with him, and none shall do him the honour of dropping one tear for him; whereas his father, who *did judgment and justice*, was universally lamented: and it is promised to Zedekiah, that he should be lamented at his death, for he carried himself better than Jehoiakim had done, *chap. xxxiv. 5*. His relations shall not lament him, no, not with the common expression of grief used at the funeral of the meanest, where they cried, *Ah my brother!* or, *Ah sister!* his subjects shall not lament him, nor cry out as they used to do at the graves of their princes, *Ah lord!* or, *Ah his glory!* It is sad for any to live so, that when they die none will be sorry to part with them. Nay, (2.) He shall lie unburied: this is worse than the former. Even those that have no tears to grace the funerals of the dead with, would willingly have them buried out of their sight; but Jehoiakim shall be *buried with the burial of an ass*, i. e. he shall have no burial at all, but his dead body shall be cast into a ditch or upon a dunghill: it shall be *drawn or dragged ignominiously, and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem*. It is said in the story of Jehoiakim, *2 Chron. xxxvi. 5*, that *Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon*, and *Ezek. xiv. 9*, that he was *brought in chains to the king of Babylon*. But it is probable he died a prisoner before he was carried away to Babylon, as was intended; perhaps died for grief, or in the pride of his heart hastened his own end, and for that reason was denied a decent burial, as false-murderers usually are with us. Josiah thus saith that *Nebuchadnezzar flew him at Jerusalem*, and left his body thus exposed, somewhere at a distance from the gates of Jerusalem. And it is said, *2 Kings xxiv. 6*, he *slept with his fathers*. When he built himself a stately house, no doubt he designed himself a stately sepulchre, but see how he was disappointed. Note, Those that are lifted up with great pride, are commonly reserved for some great disgrace in life or death.

20. ¶ Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed. 21. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyest not my voice. 22. The wind shall eat up all thy pastors, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness. 23. O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pains come upon thee, the pains as of a woman in travail! 24. As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence. 25. And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. 26. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother, that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. 27. But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return. 28. Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? 29. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. 30. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

The prophecy seems to have been calculated for the ungracious, inglorious reign of Jeconiah, or Jehoiakim the son of Jehoiakim, who succeeded him in the government, reigned but three months, and was then carried captive

captive to Babylon, where he lived many years. *Jer. lii. 21.* We have in these verses a prophecy.

1. Of the desolations of the kingdom, which were now hastening on apace, *ver. 20—23.* Jerusalem and Judah are here spoken to, or the Jewish state as a single person, and we have it here under a threefold character.

(1.) Very haughty in a day of peace and safety, *ver. 11. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; spake by my servants the prophets reproofs, admonitions, counsels, but thou saidst, I will not hear, I will not heed, thou obeyedst not my voice,* and wast resolved thou wouldst not, and hadst the front to tell me so. It is common for those that live at ease to live in contempt to the word of God. *Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.* This is so much the worse that they had it by kind; *this has been thy manner from thy youth.* They were called *transgressors from the womb*, *Ist. xlix. 8.*

(2.) Very timorous upon the alarms of trouble, *ver. 20.* When thou seest *all thy lovers destroyed*, when thou findest thine idols unable to help thee, and thy foreign alliances failing thee, thou wilt then go up to Lebanon, and cry, as one undone, and giving up all for lost, cry with a bitter cry; thou wilt cry, help, help, or we are lost; thou wilt *lift up thy voice in fearful shrieks*, upon *Lebanon and Bashan*, two high hills, in hope to be heard from thence by the advantage of the rising ground. Thou wilt cry *from the passages*, from the roads, where thou wilt ever and anon be in distress. Thou wilt cry from *Abarim*, so some read it, as a proper name, a famous mountain in the border of Moab. Thou wilt cry as those that are in great consternation use to do, to all about thee, but in vain, for *ver. 22. the wind shall eat up all thy pastors or rulers*, that should protect and lead thee, and provide for thy safety; they shall be blasted, and withered, and brought to nothing, as buds and blossoms are by a bleak or freezing wind; they shall be devoured suddenly, insensibly, and irresistibly, as fruits by the wind. *Thy lovers*, that thou dependest upon and hast an affection for, shall go into captivity; and shall be so far from saving thee, that they shall not be able to save themselves.

(3.) Very tame under the heavy and lasting pressures of trouble. When there appears no relief from any of thy confederates, and thine own priests are at a loss, *then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness*, *ver. 2.* Note, Many will never be ashamed of their sins till they are brought by them to the last extremity; and it is well if we get this good by our sins, by them to be brought to confusion for our sins. The Jewish state is here called *an inhabitant of Lebanon*, because that famous forest was within their border, *ver. 23.* and all their country was wealthy and well-guarded, as with Lebanon's natural fastnesses; but so proud and haughty were they, that they are said to *make their nest in the cedars*, where they thought themselves out of the reach of all danger, and whence they looked with contempt upon all about them. But, *how gracious wilt thou be when pangs come upon thee!* Then thou wilt humble thyself before God, and promise amendment. When thou art overthrown in stony places, thou wilt be glad to *hear those words* which in thy prosperity thou wouldst not hear, *Psal. cxli. 6.* Then thou wilt endeavour to make thyself acceptable with that God whom before thou madest light of. Note, Many have their pangs of piety, who, when the pangs are over, shew they have no true piety. Some give another sense of it: What will all thy pomp, and state, and wealth avail thee? What will become of it all, or what comfort shalt thou have of it, when thou shalt be in these distresses? No more than a *woman in travail*, full of pains and fears, can take comfort in her ornaments while she is in that condition. So Mr. Cistaker. Note, Those that are proud of their worldly advantages would do well to consider how they will look when pangs come upon them, and how they will then have lost all their beauty.

2. Here is a prophecy of the disgrace of the king: his name was Jeconiah, but he is here once and again called Coniah in contempt. The prophet shortens or nicks his name, and gives him, as we say, a nick-name, perhaps to note that he should be despoiled of his dignity, that his reign should be shortened, and the number of his months cut off in the midst. Two instances of dishonour are here put upon him:

1. He shall be carried away into captivity, and shall spend and end his days in bondage. He was born to a crown, but it should quickly fall from his head, and he should exchange it for fetters. Observe the steps of this judgment.

(1.) God will abandon him, *ver. 24.* The God of truth saith it, and confirms it with an oath; *though he were the signet upon my right hand*, his predecessors have been so, and he might have been so, if he had carried himself well; but he being degenerated *I will pluck him thence.* The godly kings of Judah had been as signets on God's right hand, near and dear to him; he had gloried in them, and made use of them as instruments of his government, as the prince doth of his signet, ring, or sign manual; but Coniah has made himself utterly unworthy of the honour, and therefore the privilege of his birth shall be no security to him; notwithstanding that he should be thrown off. Answerable to this threatening against Jeconiah is God's promise to Zerubbabel, when he made him his people's flag in their return out of captivity, *I Hag. ii. 23. I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, and make thee as a signet.* Those that think themselves as signets on God's right hand, must not be secure, but fear lest they be plucked thence.

(2.) The king of Babylon shall seize him. Those know not what enemies and mischiefs they lie exposed to, who have thrown themselves out of God's protection, *ver. 25.* The Chaldeans are here said to be such as had a spite to Coniah, they sought his life; no less than that they thought would satisfy their rage; and such as he had a dread of, they are those *whose face thou fearest*, which would make it the more terrible to him to fall into their hands, especially when it was God himself that gave him into their hands. And if God deliver him to them, who can deliver him from them?

(3.) He and his family shall be carried to Babylon, where they shall wear out the many tedious years of their lives in a miserable captivity; *he and his mother*, *ver. 26. he and his seed*, *ver. 28. i. e.* he and all the royal family; for he had no children of his own when he went into captivity; or, he and the children in his loins: they shall all be cast out to another country, to a strange country, a country where they were not born, nor such a country as that where they were born, a land which they know not, in which they have no acquaintance, with whom to converse, or from whom to expect any kindness. Thither they shall be carried, from a land where they were intitled to dominion, into a land where they shall be compelled to servitude. But have they no hopes of seeing their own country again? No; *To the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return*, *ver. 27.* They carried themselves ill in it, when they were in it, and therefore they shall never see it more. Jehoahaz was carried to Egypt, the land of the south, *ver. 10.* Jeconiah to Babylon, the land of the north; both far remote, the quite contrary way, and must never expect to meet again, nor either of them to breathe their native air again. Those that had abused the dominion they had over others, were justly brought thus under the dominion of others. Those that had indulged and gratified their sinful desires, by their oppression, luxury, and cruelty, were

justly denied the gratification of their innocent desire, to see their own native country again. We may observe something very emphatical in that part of this threatening, *ver. 26. In the country where ye were not born, there shall ye die.* As there is a time to be born, and a time to die, so there is a place to be born in, and a place to die in. We know where we were born, but where we shall die we know not: it is enough that our God knows. Let it be our care that we die in Christ, and then it will be well with us wherever we die, though it should be in a far country.

(4.) This shall render him very mean and despicable in the eyes of all his neighbours. They shall be ready to say, *ver. 28. Is this Coniah a despised broken idol?* Yes, certainly he is, and much debased from what he was.

(1.) Time was when he was dignified, nay, when he was almost deified. The people, who had seen his father lately deposed, were ready to adore him when they saw him upon the throne; but now *he is a despised broken idol*, that when it was whole was worshipped, but when it is rotten and broken is thrown by and despised, and nobody regards it, or remembers what it has been. Note, What is idolized will first or last be despised and broken; what is unjustly honoured, will be justly contemned, and rivals with God will be the scorn of man. Whatever we idolize, we shall be disappointed in, and then shall despise. (2.) Time was when he was delighted in, but now he is *a vessel in which is no pleasure*, or to which there is no desire, either because grown out of fashion, or because cracked or dirtied, and so rendered unserviceable. Those whom God has no pleasure in, will some time or other be so mortified, that men will have no pleasure in them.

2. He shall leave no posterity to inherit his honour. The prediction of this is uttered in with a solemn preface, *ver. 29. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.* Let all the inhabitants of the world take notice of these judgments of God upon a nation and a family that had been near and dear to him, and from thence infer, that God is impartial in the administration of justice. Or, it is an appeal to the earth itself on which we tread, since those that dwell on earth are so deaf and careless, like that, *Ist. i. 2. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!* God's word, however slighted, will be heard; the earth itself will be made to hear it, and yield to it, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Or, it is a call to men that mind earthly things, that are swallowed up in the pursuit of them; such have need to be called upon again and again, and a third time, to *hear the word of the Lord.* Or, It is a call to men, considered as mortal, of the earth, and harkening to the earth again; we all are so, earth we are, *dust we are*, and in consideration of that, are concerned to hear and regard the word of the Lord, that though we are earth, we may be found among those whose names are written in heaven.

Now that which is here to be taken notice of, is, that Jeconiah is written childless, *ver. 30.* that is, as it follows, *no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David.* In him the line of David was extinct as a royal line. Some think he had children born in Babylon, because mention is made of his seed being cast out there, *ver. 28.* and that they died before him. We read in the genealogy, *1 Chron. iii. 17.* of seven sons of Jeconiah Assir, *i. e.* Jeconiah the captive, of which Salathiel is the first. Some think they were only his adopted sons, and that when it is said, *Matt. i. 12. Jeconiah begat Salathiel*, no more is meant but that he bequeathed to him what claims and pretensions he had to the government: the rather, because Salathiel is called the son of Neri, *Luke iii. 27. of the house of Nathan*, *ver. 31.* Whether he had children begotten, or only adopted, thus far he was childless, that none of his seed ruled as kings in Judah. He was the Augustus of that empire, in whom it determined. Whoever are childless, it is God that writes them so; and those who take no care to do good in their days, cannot expect to prosper in their days.

C H A P. XXIII.

In this chapter the prophet, in God's name, is dealing the reproofs and threatenings, (1.) Among the careless princes, or pastors of the people, *ver. 1, 2. yet promising to take care of the flock, which they had been wanting in their duty to*, *ver. 3—8.* (2.) Among the wicked prophets and priests, whose ill character is here given at large in divers instances, especially their imposing upon the people with their pretended inspirations, at which the prophet is astonished, and for which they must expect to be punished, *ver. 9—32.* (3.) Among the profane people, who ridiculed God's prophets and bantered them, *ver. 33—40. When all have thus corrupted their way, they must all expect to be told faithfully of it.*

1. **W**OE be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.
2. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.
3. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.
4. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, or be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.
5. ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.
6. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.
7. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;
8. But, The LORD liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Here is, 1. A word of terror to the negligent shepherds; the day is at hand when God will reckon with them concerning the trust and charge committed to them, *Woe be to the pastors*, *i. e.* to the rulers, both in church, and state, who should be to those they are set over as pastors to lead them, feed

feed them, protect them, and take care of them. They are not owners of the sheep; God here calls them *the sheep of my pasture*, whom I am interested in, and have provided good pasture for: *Woe be to those therefore that are commanded to feed God's people, and pretend to it; but instead of that they scatter the flock, and drive them away by their violence and oppression, and have not visited them, nor taken any care for their welfare, nor concerned themselves at all to do them good! In not visiting them, and doing their duty to them, and did in effect scatter them, and drive them away.* The beasts of prey scattered them, and the shepherds are in the fault, that should have kept them together. *Woe be to them, when God will visit upon them the evil of their doings, and deal with them as they deserve!* They would not visit the flock in a way of duty, and therefore God will visit them in a way of vengeance.

2. Here is a word of comfort to the neglected sheep. Though the under-shepherds take no care of them, no pains with them, but betray them, the chief Shepherd will look after them: *When my father, and my mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up.* Though the interests of God's church in the world are neglected by those who should take care of them, and postponed to their own private secular interests, yet they shall not therefore sink. God will perform his promise, though those he employs do not perform their duty.

1. The dispersed Jews shall at length return to their own land, and be happily settled there under a good government, *ver. 3, 4.* Though there be but a remnant of God's flock left, a little remnant, that has narrowly escaped destruction, he will gather that remnant; will find them out wherever they are, and find out ways and means to bring them back out of all countries whither I have driven them. It was the justice of God for the sin of their shepherds that dispersed them, but the mercy of God shall gather in the sheep, when the shepherds that betrayed them are cut off. *They shall be brought to their former habitations, as sheep to their folds, and there they shall be fruitful and increase in numbers.* And though their former shepherds took no care of them, it doth not therefore follow that they shall have no more; If some have abused a sacred office, that is no good reason why it should be deposed: they destroyed the sheep, but I will set shepherds over them which shall make it their business to feed them. Formerly they were continually exposed and disturbed with some alarm or other; but now *they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed:* they shall be in no danger from without, in no fright from within. Formerly some or other of them were ever and anon picked up by the beasts of prey, but now *none of them shall be lacking, none of them missing.* Though the times may have been long had with the church, it doth not follow that they will be ever so. Such pastors as Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were, though they lived not in the pomp that Jehoiakim and Jeconiah did, nor made such a figure, were as great blessings to the people as the others were plagues to them. The church's peace is not bound up in the pomp of her rulers.

2. Messiah the Prince, that great and good shepherd of the sheep, shall in the latter days be raised up to bless his church, and to be the glory of his people Israel, *ver. 5, 6.* The house of David seemed to be quite sunk and ruined by that threatening against Jeconiah, *chap. xxii. 30.* that none of his seed should ever sit upon the throne of David; but here is a promise which effectually secures the honour of their covenant made with David notwithstanding; for by it the house will be raised out of its ruin to a greater lustre than ever, and shine brighter far than it did in Solomon himself. We have not so many prophecies of Christ in this book as we had in that of the prophet *Isaiah*; but here we have one, and a very illustrious one; of him doubtless the prophet here speaks, of him and of no other man. The first words intimate, that it would be long ere this promise shall have its accomplishment; *The days come;* but they are not yet; I shall see him, but not now; but all the rest intimate, that the accomplishment of them will be glorious.

(1.) Christ is here spoken of as a branch from David, the *Man, the Branch*, *Zech. xiii. 8.* His appearance mean, the beginnings shall be like those of a bud or sprout, and his rise seemingly out of the earth, but growing to be green, to be great, to be loaded with fruits. A branch from David's family, when it seemed to be a root in a dry ground, buried, and not likely to revive. Christ is the root and offspring of David, *Rev. xxii. 16.* In him doth the horn of David butt, *Psal. cxxxiii. 17, 18.* He is a branch of God's raising up, he sanctified him, and sent him into the world, gave him his commission and qualifications. He is a righteous branch, for he is righteous himself, and through him many, even all that are his, are made righteous; as an advocate, he is *Jesus Christ the righteous.*

(2.) He is here spoken of as his church's king. The branch shall be raised as high as the throne of his father David, and there he shall reign and prosper, not as the kings that now were of the house of David, that went backward in all their affairs; no, he shall set up a kingdom in the world, that shall be victorious over all opposition. In the chariot of the everlasting gospel he shall go forth, he shall go on conquering and to conquer. If God raise him up, he will prosper him, for he will own the work of his own hand; what is the good pleasure of the Lord, shall prosper in the hands of those to whom it is committed. He shall prosper, for he shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, all the world over, *Psal. xcvi. 13.* The present kings of the house of David were unjust and oppressive, and therefore no wonder they did not prosper; but Christ shall by his gospel, break the usurped power of Satan, institute a perfect rule of holy living, and as far as it prevails, make all the world righteous. The effect of this shall be a holy security and serenity of mind in all his faithful loyal subjects. In his days, under his dominion, *Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely,* i. e. all the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob, shall be protected from the curse of heaven, and the malice of hell; shall be privileged from the arrests of God's law, and delivered from the attempts of Satan's power; shall be saved from sin, the guilt and dominion of it, and then shall dwell safely, and be quiet from the fear of all evil. See *Luke i. 74, 75.* Those that shall be saved hereafter from the wrath to come, may dwell safely now; for if God be for us, who can be against us? In the days of Christ's government in the soul, when he is uppermost there, the soul dwells at ease.

(3.) He is here spoken of as *The Lord our righteousness.* Observe, (1.) Who and what he is: As God he is Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God speaking his eternity and self-existence: As Mediator, he is our righteousness, by making satisfaction to the justice of God for the sin of man, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness, and so made it over to us in the covenant of grace, that upon our believing consent to that covenant, it becomes ours. His being *Jehovah our righteousness* implies, that he is so our righteousness as no creature could be. He is a sovereign, all-sufficient, eternal righteousness: All our righteousness has its being from him, and by him it subsists, and we are made the righteousness of God in him. (2.) The profession and declaration of this, *This is the name whereby he shall be called;* not only he shall be so, but he shall be known to be so. God shall call him by this name, for he shall appoint him to be our righteousness. By this name Israel shall call him, every true believer shall call him, and call upon him. That is our righteousness, by which, as an allowed plea, we are justified before God, acquitted from guilt, and accepted into favour; and nothing

else have we to plead but this, "Christ has died, yea, rather, is risen again." and we have taken him for our Lord.

3. This great salvation which will come to the Jews in the latter days of their state, after their return out of Babylon, shall be so illustrious, as far to outshine the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, *ver. 7, 8.* *They shall no more say, The Lord liveth that brought up Israel out of Egypt; but the Lord liveth that brought them up out of the north.* This we had before, *chap. xvi. 14, 15.* But here it seems to point more plainly than it did there to the days of the Messiah, and to compare not so much the two deliverances themselves, giving the preference to the latter, as the two states to which the church by degrees grew after those deliverances: Observe the proportion: Just 480 years after they were come out of Egypt, Solomon's temple was built, *1 Kings vi. 1.* and at that time that nation, which was so wonderfully brought up out of Egypt, was gradually arrived to its height, to its zenith: Just 490 years (70 weeks) after they came out of Babylon, Messiah the Prince set up the gospel temple, which was the greatest glory of that nation, that was so wonderfully brought out of Babylon; see *Dan. ix. 24, 25.* Now the spiritual glory of the second part of that nation, especially as transferred to the gospel-church, is much more admirable and illustrious than all the temporal glory of the first part of it in the days of Solomon; for that was no glory, compared with the glory which excelleth.

9. ¶ Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.

10. For the land is full of adulterers, for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. 11. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD. 12. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD. 13. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. 14. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. 15. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. 16. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. 17. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. 18. For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? 19. Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. 20. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days he shall consider it perfectly. 21. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. 22. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. 23. Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? 24. Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. 25. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. 26. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; 27. Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. 28. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. 29. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? 30. Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. 31. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith, 32. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their

captive to Babylon, where he lived many years. *Jer. lii. 21.* We have in these verses a prophecy.

1. Of the desolations of the kingdom, which were now hastening on apace, *ver. 20—23.* Jerusalem and Judah are here spoken to, or the Jewish state as a single person, and we have it here under a threefold character.

(1.) Very haughty in a day of peace and safety, *ver. 11. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; spake by my servants the prophets reproofs, admonitions, counsels, but thou saidst, I will not hear, I will not heed, thou obeyedst not my voice,* and wast resolved thou wouldst not, and hadst the front to tell me so. It is common for those that live at ease to live in contempt to the word of God. *Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.* This is so much the worse that they had it by kind; *this has been thy manner from thy youth.* They were called *transgressors from the womb*, *Ist. xlix. 8.*

(2.) Very timorous upon the alarms of trouble, *ver. 20.* When thou seest *all thy lovers destroyed*, when thou findest thine idols unable to help thee, and thy foreign alliances failing thee, thou wilt then go up to Lebanon, and cry, as one undone, and giving up all for lost, cry with a bitter cry: thou wilt cry, help, help, or we are lost: thou wilt *lift up thy voice in fearful shrieks*, upon Lebanon and Bashan, two high hills, in hope to be heard from thence by the advantage of the rising ground. Thou wilt cry from the passages, from the roads, where thou wilt ever and anon be in distress. Thou wilt cry from *Abarim*, so some read it, as a proper name, a famous mountain in the border of Moab. Thou wilt cry as those that are in great consternation use to do, to all about thee, but in vain, for *ver. 22. the wind shall eat up all thy pastors or rulers*, that should protect and lead thee, and provide for thy safety; they shall be blasted, and withered, and brought to nothing, as buds and blossoms are by a bleak or freezing wind: they shall be devoured suddenly, insensibly, and irresistibly, as fruits by the wind. *Thy lovers*, that thou dependedst upon and hadst an affection for, shall go into captivity; and shall be so far from saving thee, that they shall not be able to save themselves.

(3.) Very tame under the heavy and lasting pressures of trouble. When there appears no relief from any of thy confederates, and thine own priests are at a loss, *then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness*, *ver. 2.* Note, Many will never be ashamed of their sins till they are brought by them to the last extremity; and it is well if we get this good by our sins, by them to be brought to confusion for our sins. The Jewish state is here called *an inhabitant of Lebanon*, because that famous forest was within their border, *ver. 23.* and all their country was wealthy and well-guarded, as with Lebanon's natural fastnesses; but so proud and haughty were they, that they are said to *make their nest in the cedars*, where they thought themselves out of the reach of all danger, and whence they looked with contempt upon all about them. But, *how gracious wilt thou be when pangs come upon thee!* Then thou wilt humble thyself before God, and promise amendment. When thou art overthrown in stony places, thou wilt be glad to hear those words which in thy prosperity thou wouldst not hear, *Psal. cxli. 6.* Then thou wilt endeavour to make thyself acceptable with that God whom before thou madest light of. Note, Many have their pangs of piety, who, when the pangs are over, show they have no true piety. Some give another sense of it: What will all thy pomp, and state, and wealth avail thee? What will become of it all, or what comfort shalt thou have of it, when thou shalt be in these distresses? No more than a woman in travail, full of pains and fears, can take comfort in her ornaments while she is in that condition. So Mr. Gataker. Note, Those that are proud of their worldly advantages would do well to consider how they will look when pangs come upon them, and how they will then have lost all their beauty.

2. Here is a prophecy of the disgrace of the king: his name was Jeroniah, but he is here once and again called Coniah in contempt. The prophet shortens or nicks his name, and gives him, as we say, a nick-name, perhaps to note that he should be despoiled of his dignity. That his reign should be shortened, and the number of his months cut off in the midst. Two instances of dishonour are here put upon him:

1. He shall be carried away into captivity, and shall spend and end his days in bondage. He was born to a crown, but it should quickly fall from his head, and he should exchange it for fetters. Observe the steps of this judgment.

(1.) God will abandon him, *ver. 24.* The God of truth saith it, and confirms it with an oath; *though he were the signet upon my right hand*, his predecessors have been so, and he might have been so, if he had carried himself well; but he being degenerated *I will pluck him thence.* The godly kings of Judah had been as signets on God's right hand, near and dear to him: he had gloried in them, and made use of them as instruments of his government, as the prince doth of his signet, ring, or sign manual; but Coniah has made himself utterly unworthy of the honour, and therefore the privilege of his birth shall be no security to him; notwithstanding that he should be thrown off. Answerable to this threatening against Jeroniah is God's promise to Zerubbabel, when he made him his people's guide in their return out of captivity, *Hag. ii. 23. I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, and make thee as a signet.* Those that think themselves as signets on God's right hand, must not be secure, but fear lest they be plucked thence.

(2.) The king of Babylon shall seize him. Those know not what enemies and mischiefs they lie exposed to, who have thrown themselves out of God's protection, *ver. 25.* The Chaldeans are here said to be such as had a spite to Coniah, they sought his life; no less than that they thought would satisfy their rage; and such as he had a dread of, they are those whose face thou fearest, which would make it the more terrible to him to fall into their hands, especially when it was God himself that gave him into their hands. And if God deliver him to them, who can deliver him from them?

(3.) He and his family shall be carried to Babylon, where they shall wear out the many tedious years of their lives in a miserable captivity; *he and his mother*, *ver. 26. he and his seed*, *ver. 28. i. e.* he and all the royal family; for he had no children of his own when he went into captivity; or, he and the children in his loins: they shall all be cut out to another country, to a strange country, a country where they were not born, nor such a country as that where they were born, a land which they know not, in which they have no acquaintance, with whom to converse, or from whom to expect any kindness. Whether they shall be carried, from a land where they were intitled to dominion, into a land where they shall be compelled to servitude. But have they no hopes of seeing their own country again? No; *To the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return*, *ver. 27.* They carried themselves ill in it, when they were in it, and therefore they shall never see it more. Jehonah was carried to Egypt, the land of the south, *ver. 10.* Jeroniah to Babylon, the land of the north; both far remote, the quite contrary way, and must never expect to meet again, nor either of them to breathe their native air again. Those that had abused the dominion they had over others, were justly brought thus under the dominion of others. Those that had indulged and gratified their sinful desires, by their oppression, luxury, and cruelty, were

justly denied the gratification of their innocent desire, to see their own native country again. We may observe something very emphatical in that part of this threatening, *ver. 26. In the country where ye were not born, there shall ye die.* As there is a time to be born, and a time to die, so there is a place to be born in, and a place to die in. We know, where we were born, but where we shall die we know not; it is enough that our God knows. Let it be our care that we die in Christ, and then it will be well with us wherever we die, though it should be in a far country.

(4.) This shall render him very mean and despicable in the eyes of all his neighbours. They shall be ready to say, *ver. 24. Is this Coniah a despised broken idol?* Yes, certainly he is, and much debased from what he was.

(1.) Time was when he was dignified, nay, when he was almost deified. The people, who had seen his father lately deposed, were ready to adore him when they saw him upon the throne; but now *he is a despised broken idol*, that when it was whole was worshipped, but when it is rotten and broken is thrown by and despised, and nobody regards it, or remembers what it has been. Note, What is idolized will first or last be despised and broken: what is unjustly honoured, will be justly contemptued, and rival with God will be the scorn of man. Whosoever we idolize, we shall be disappointed in, and then shall despise. (2.) Time was when he was delighted in, but now he is a vessel in which is no pleasure, or to which there is no desire, either because grown out of fashion, or because cracked or dirtied, and so rendered unserviceable. Those whom God has no pleasure in, will sometime or other be so mortified, that man will have no pleasure in them.

2. He shall leave no posterity to inherit his honour. The prediction of this is uttered in with a solemn preface, *ver. 29. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.* Let all the inhabitants of the world take notice of these judgments of God upon a nation and a family that had been near and dear to him, and from thence infer, that God is impartial in the administration of justice. Or, it is an appeal to the earth itself on which we tread, since those that dwell on earth are so deaf and careless, like that, *Ist. i. 2. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!* God's word, however slighted, will be heard; the earth itself will be made to hear it, and yield to it, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Or, it is a call to men that mind earthly things, that are swallowed up in the pursuit of them: such have need to be called upon again and again, and a third time, *to hear the word of the Lord.* Or, it is a call to men, considered as mortal, of the earth, and listening to the earth again; we all are so, earth we are, dust we are, and in consideration of that, are concerned to hear and regard the word of the Lord, that though we are earth, we may be saved among those whose names are written in heaven.

Now that which is here to be taken notice of, is, that Jeroniah is written childless, *ver. 30.* that is, as it follows, *no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David.* In him the line of David was extinct as a royal line. Some think he had children born in Babylon, because mention is made of his seed being cast out there, *ver. 29.* and that they died before him. We read in the genealogy, *1 Chron. iii. 17.* of seven sons of Jeroniah Affir, *i. e.* Jeroniah the captive, of which Salathiel is the first. Some think they were only his adopted sons, and that when it is said, *Matt. i. 12. Jeroniah begat Salathiel*, no more is meant but that he bequeathed to him what claims and pretensions he had to the government: the rather, because Salathiel is called the son of Neri, *Matth. iii. 27. of the house of Nathan*, *ver. 31.* Whether he had children begotten, or only adopted, thus far he was childless, that none of his seed ruled as kings in Judah. He was the Augustus of that empire, in whom it determined. Whoever are childless, it is God that writes them so; and those who take no care to do good in their days, cannot expect to prosper in their days.

C H A P. XXIII.

In this chapter the prophet, in God's name, is dealing the reproofs and threatenings. (1.) Among the careless princes, or pastors of the people, *ver. 1, 2.* yet promising to take care of the flock, which they had been wanting in their duty to, *ver. 3—8.* (2.) Among the wicked prophets and priests, whose ill character is here given at large in divers instances, especially their imposing upon the people with their pretended inspirations, at which the prophet is astonished, and for which they must expect to be punished, *ver. 9—32.* (3.) Among the profane people, who ridiculed God's prophets and bantered them, *ver. 33—40.* When all have thus corrupted their way, they must all expect to be told faithfully of it.

1. **W**OE be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.

2. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. 3. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, or be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD. 5. ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. 6. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 8. But, The LORD liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Here is, 1. A word of terror to the negligent shepherds; the day is at hand when God will reckon with them concerning the trust and charge committed to them, *Woe be to the pastors*, *i. e.* to the rulers, both in church, and state, who should be to those they are set over as pastors to lead them, feed

feed them, protect them, and take care of them. They are not owners of the sheep; God here calls them *the sheep of my pasture*, whom I am interested in, and have provided good pasture for: *Woe be to those therefore that are commanded to feed God's people, and pretend to it; but instead of that they scatter the flock, and drive them away by their violence and oppression, and have not visited them, nor taken any care for their welfare, nor concerned themselves at all to do them good! In not visiting them, and doing their duty to them, and did in effect scatter them, and drive them away.* The beasts of prey scattered them, and the shepherds are in the fault, that should have kept them together. *Woe be to them, when God will visit upon them the evil of their doings, and deal with them as they deserve!* They would not visit the flock in a way of duty, and therefore God will visit them in a way of vengeance.

2. Here is a word of comfort to the neglected sheep. Though the under-shepherds take no care of them, no pains with them, but betray them, the chief Shepherd will look after them: *When my father, and my mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up.* Though the interests of God's church in the world are neglected by those who should take care of them, and postponed to their own private interests, yet they shall not therefore sink. God will perform his promise, though those he employs do not perform their duty.

1. The dispersed Jews shall at length return to their own land, and be happily settled there under a good government, *ver. 3, 4.* Though there be but a remnant of God's flock left, a little remnant, that has narrowly escaped destruction, he will gather that remnant; will find them out wherever they are, and find out ways and means to bring them back out of all countries whither I have driven them. It was the justice of God for the sin of their shepherds that dispersed them, but the mercy of God shall gather in the sheep, when the shepherds that betrayed them are cut off. *They shall be brought to their former habitations, as sheep to their folds, and there they shall be fruitful and increase in numbers.* And though their former shepherds took no care of them, it doth not therefore follow that they shall have no more; If some have abused a sacred office, that is no good reason why it should be deposed; they destroyed the sheep, but I will let shepherds over them which shall make it their business to feed them. Formerly they were continually exposed and disturbed with some alarm or other; but now *they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed; they shall be in no danger from without, in no fright from within.* Formerly some or other of them were ever and anon picked up by the beasts of prey, but now *none of them shall be lacking, none of them missing.* Though the times may have been long bad with the church, it doth not follow that they will be ever so. Such pastors as Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were, though they lived not in the pomp that Jehoiakim and Jeconiah did, nor made such a figure, were as great blessings to the people as the others were plagues to them. The church's peace is not bound up in the pomp of her rulers.

2. Messiah the Prince, that great and good shepherd of the sheep, shall in the latter days be raised up to bless his church, and to be the glory of his people Israel, *ver. 5, 6.* The house of David seemed to be quite sunk and ruined by that threatening against Jeconiah, *chap. xxii. 30.* that none of his seed should ever sit upon the throne of David; but here is a promise which effectually secures the honour of their covenant made with David notwithstanding; for by it the house will be raised out of its ruin to a greater lustre than ever, and shine brighter far than it did in Solomon himself. We have not so many prophecies of Christ in this book as we had in that of the prophet *Isaiah*; but here we have one, and a very illustrious one; of him doubtless the prophet here speaks, of him and of no other man. The first words intimate, that it would be long ere this promise shall have its accomplishment; *The days come; but they are not yet; I shall see him, but not now; but all the rest intimate, that the accomplishment of them will be glorious.*

(1.) Christ is here spoken of as a branch from David, the *Man, the Branch*, *Zech. vii. 12.* His appearance mean, the beginnings shall be like those of a bud or sprout, and his rise seemingly out of the earth, but growing to be green, to be great, to be loaded with fruits. A branch from David's family, when it seemed to be a root in a dry ground, buried, and not likely to revive. Christ is the root and offspring of David, *Rev. xxii. 16.* In him doth the horn of David butt, *Psal. cxxxii. 17, 18.* He is a branch of God's raising up, he sanctified him, and sent him into the world, gave him his commission and qualifications. He is a righteous branch, for he is righteous himself, and through him many, even all that are his, are made righteous; as an advocate, he is *Jesus Christ the righteous.*

(2.) He is here spoken of as his church's king. The branch shall be raised as high as the throne of his father David, and there he shall reign and prosper, not as the kings that now were of the house of David, that went backward in all their affairs; no, he shall set up a kingdom in the world, that shall be victorious over all opposition. In the chariot of the everlasting gospel he shall go forth, he shall go on conquering and to conquer. If God raise him up, he will prosper him, for he will own the work of his own hand; what is the good pleasure of the Lord, shall prosper in the hands of those to whom it is committed. He shall prosper, for he shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, all the world over, *Psal. xvi. 13.* The present kings of the house of David were unjust and oppressive, and therefore no wonder they did not prosper; but Christ shall by his gospel, break the usurped power of Satan, institute a perfect rule of holy living, and as far as it prevails, make all the world righteous. The effect of this shall be a holy security and serenity of mind in all his faithful loyal subjects. *In his days, under his dominion, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, i. e. all the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and paying Jacob, shall be protected from the curse of heaven, and the malice of hell; shall be privileged from the arrests of God's law, and delivered from the attempts of Satan's power; shall be saved from sin, the guilt and dominion of it, and then shall dwell safely, and be quiet from the fear of all evil.* See *Luke i. 74, 75.* That state that shall be saved hereafter from the wrath to come, may dwell safely now; for if God be for us, who can be against us? In the days of Christ's government in the soul, when he is uppermost there, the soul dwells at ease.

(3.) He is here spoken of as *The Lord our righteousness.* Observe, (1.) Who and what he is: As God he is Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God speaking his eternity and self-existence: As Mediator, he is our righteousness, by making satisfaction to the justice of God for the sin of man, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness, and so made it over to us in the covenant of grace, that upon our believing consent to that covenant, it becomes ours. His being *Jehovah our righteousness* implies, that he is so our righteousness as no creature could be. He is a sovereign, all-sufficient, eternal righteousness: All our righteousness has its being from him, and by him it subsists, and we are made the righteousness of God in him. (2.) The profession and declaration of this, *This is the name whereby he shall be called; not only he shall be so, but he shall be known to be so.* God shall call him by this name, for he shall appoint him to be our righteousness. By this name Israel shall call him, every true believer shall call him, and call upon him. That is our righteousness, by which, as an allowed plea, we are justified before God, acquitted from guilt, and accepted into favour; and nothing

else have we to plead but this, "Christ has died, yea, rather, is risen again." and we have taken him for our Lord.

3. This great salvation which will come to the Jews in the latter days of their state, after their return out of Babylon, shall be so illustrious, as far to outshine the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, *ver. 7, 8.* *They shall no more say, The Lord liveth that brought up Israel out of Egypt; but the Lord liveth that brought them up out of the north.* This we had before, *chap. xvi. 14, 15.* But here it seems to point more plainly than it did there to the days of the Messiah, and to compare not so much the two deliverances themselves, giving the preference to the latter, as the two states to which the church by degrees grew after those deliverances: Observe the proportion: Just 430 years after they were come out of Egypt, Solomon's temple was built, *1 Kings vi. 1.* and at that time that nation, which was so wonderfully brought up out of Egypt, was gradually arrived to its height, to its zenith: Just 490 years (70 weeks) after they came out of Babylon, Messiah the Prince set up the gospel temple, which was the greatest glory of that nation, that was so wonderfully brought out of Babylon; see *Dan. ix. 24, 25.* Now the spiritual glory of the second part of that nation, especially as transferred to the gospel-church, is much more admirable and illustrious than all the temporal glory of the first part of it in the days of Solomon; for that was no glory, compared with the glory which excelleth.

9. ¶ Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.

10. For the land is full of adulterers, for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. 11. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.

12. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

13. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.

14. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies; they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. 15. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

16. Thus saith the LORD of hosts. Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.

17. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

18. For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?

19. Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. 20. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days he shall consider it perfectly.

21. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. 22. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

23. Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? 24. Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

25. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophecy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. 26. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

27. Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. 28. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.

What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. 29. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

30. Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. 31. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith, 32. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by

their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

Here is a long lesson for the false prophets: As none were more bitter and spiteful against God's true prophets than they, so there were none on whom the true prophets were more severely rebuked justly. The prophet had complained to God of those false prophets, chap. xiv. 13. and had often foretold that they should be involved in the common ruin, but here they have woes of their own.

1. He expresseth the deep concern that he was under upon this account, and what a trouble it was to him to see men that pretended to a divine commission and inspiration, ruining themselves and the people among whom they dwelt, by their falsehood and treachery, ver. 9. *My heart within me is broken, I am like a drunken man.* His head was in confusion with wonder and astonishment, his heart was under oppression with grief and vexation. Jeremiah was a man that laid things much to heart, and what was any way threatening to his country made a deep impression upon his spirits. He is here in trouble, (1.) *Because of the prophets*, and their sin, the false doctrine they preached, the wicked lives they lived; especially it filled him with horror, to hear them making use of God's name, and pretending to have their instructions from him. Never was the Lord so abused, and the words of his holiness, as by these men. Note, The dishonour done to God's name, and the profanation of his holy word, is the greatest grief imaginable to a gracious soul. (2.) *Because of the Lord*, and his judgments, that by this means are brought in upon us like a deluge. He trembled to think of that ruin and desolation which was coming from the face of the Lord (so the word is) and from the face of the word of his holiness, which will be inflicted by the power of God's wrath, according to the threatenings of his word, confirmed by his holiness. Note, Those that have God for them, yet cannot but tremble to think of the misery of those that have God against them.

2. He laments the abounding, abominable wickedness of the land, and the present tokens of God's displeasure they were under for it, ver. 10. *The land is full of adulterers*, it is full both of spiritual and corporal whoredom; they go a whoring from God, and having cast off the fear of him, no marvel that they abandon themselves to all manner of lewdness: and having dishonoured themselves and their own bodies, they dishonour God and his name by rash and false swearing, *because of which the land mourns.* Both perjury and common swearing are sins, for which a land must mourn in true repentance, or will be made to mourn under the judgments of God. Their land mourned now under the judgment of famine, the pleasant places, or rather the pastures, or, as some read it, the habitations of the wilderness, are dried up for want of rain, and yet we see no signs of repentance; they answer not the end of the correction; the tenor and tendency of men's conversations are sinful, their course continues evil, as bad as ever, and they will not be diverted from it. They have a great deal of resolution, but it is turned the wrong way, are zealously affected, but not in a good thing, their force is not right; their heart is fully set in them to do evil, and they are not valiant for the truth, have not courage enough to break off their evil courses, though they see God thus contending with them.

3. He chargeth it all upon the prophets and priests, especially the prophets. They are both profane, ver. 11. the priests profane the ordinances of God they pretend to administer, the prophets profane the word of God they pretend to deliver; their converse and all their conversation is profane, and then it is not strange that the people are so debauched. They both play the hypocrite, so some read it; under sacred pretensions they carry on the vilest designs; yea, not only in their own houses, and the ill houses they frequent, but in my house have I found their wickedness; in the temple, where the priests ministered, where the prophets prophesied, there were they guilty both of idolatry and immorality. See a woeful instance in Hophni and Phinehas, 1 Sam. ii. 22. God searcheth his house, and what wickedness is there he will find it out; and the nearer it is to him, the more offensive it is. Two things are charged upon them:

(1.) That they taught people to sin by their examples. He compares them with the prophets of Samaria, the head city of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which had been long since laid waste. It was the folly of the prophets of Samaria, that they prophesied in Baal, in Baal's name, so Ahab's prophets did, and so they caused my people Israel to err, to forsake the service of the true God, and to worship Baal, ver. 13. Now the prophets of Jerusalem did not do so, they prophesied in the name of the true God, and valued themselves upon that, that they were not like the prophets of Samaria who prophesied in Baal; but what the better, when they debauched the nation as much by their immoralities, as the others had done by their idolatries. It is a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem, that they make use of the name of the holy God, and yet wallow in all manner of impurity; they make nothing of committing adultery, they make use of the name of the God of truth, and yet walk in lies; they not only prophesy lies, but in their common conversation one cannot believe a word they say. It is all either jest and banter, or fraud and design. Thus they encourage sinners to go on in their wicked ways; for every one will say, Surely we may do as the prophets do; who can expect that we should be better than our teachers? By this means it is, that none doth return from his wickedness; but they all say they shall have peace, though they go on, for their prophets tell them so. By this means Judah and Jerusalem are become as Sodom and Gomorrah, that were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and God looked upon them accordingly, as fit for nothing but to be destroyed, as they were, with fire and brimstone.

(2.) That they encouraged people in sin by their false prophecies. They made themselves believe there was no harm, no danger in sin, and practised accordingly, and then no marvel they made others believe so too, ver. 16. They speak a vision of their own heart; it is the product of their own invention and agrees with their own inclination, but it is not out of the mouth of the Lord; he never dictated it to them, nor doth it agree either with the law of Moses, or with what God has spoken by other prophets. They tell sinners it shall be well with them, though they persist in their sins, ver. 18. See here who they are that they encourage; those that despise God, that slight his authority, and have low and mean thoughts of his institutions, and those that walk after the imagination of their own heart, that are worshippers of idols, and slaves to their own lusts; those that are devoted to their pleasures, put contempt upon their God. Yet see how these prophets cared and flattered them: they should have been still saying, There is no peace to them that go on in their evil ways, those that despise God shall be lightly esteemed; woe, and a thousand woes to them! but they still said, Ye shall have peace, no evil shall come upon you. And, which was worst of all, they told them, God had said so; so making him to patronize sin, and to contradict himself. Note, Those that are resolved to go on in their evil ways, will justly be given up to believe the strong delusions of those that tell them they shall have peace, though they go on.

4. God disowns all that these false prophets said to soothe people up in their sins, ver. 21. *I have not sent these prophets*, they never did any mission

from God, they were not only not sent by him on this errand, but they were never sent by him on any errand, he never had employed them in any service or business for him; and as to this matter, whereas they pretended to have instructions from him to assure this people of peace, he declares he never gave them any such instructions; yet they were very forward, they ran, they were very bold, they prophesied without any of that difficulty with which the true prophets sometimes struggled. They said to sinners, *You shall have peace.* But ver. 18. *Who hath stood in the council of the Lord*, i. e. who of you hath, that are so confident of this? You deliver this message with a great deal of assurance, but have you consulted God about it? No; you never considered whether it be agreeable to the discoveries God has made of himself, whether it will consist with the honour of his holiness and justice, to let sinners go unpunished. You have not perceived and heard his word, nor marked that, you have not compared this with the scripture; if you had taken notice of that, and of the constant tenor of it; you would never have delivered such a message. The prophets themselves must try the spirits by the touchstone of the law and of the testimony, as well as those to whom they prophesy: but which of those did so that prophesied of peace? That they did not stand in God's counsel nor hear his word, is proved afterwards, ver. 22. *If they had stood in my counsel as they pretend*, (1.) They would have made the scriptures their standard, they would have caused my people to hear my words, and would have conscientiously kept close to them. But not speaking according to that rule, it is a plain evidence there is no light in them. (2.) They would have made the conversions of souls their business, and would have aimed at that in all their preaching; they would have done all they could to turn people from their evil way in general, and from all the particular evil of their doings. They would have encouraged and assisted the reformation of manners, would have made this their scope in all their preaching, to part between men and their sins; but it appeared this was a thing they never aimed at, but, on the contrary, to encourage sinners in their sins. (3.) They would have had some seals of their ministry. This sense our translation gives it, if they had stood in my counsel, and the words they had preached had been my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way. A divine power should have gone along with the word for the conviction of sinners; God will own his own institutions. Yet this is no certain rule, Jeremiah himself, though God sent him, prevailed with but few to turn from their evil way.

5. God threatens to punish these prophets for their wickedness. They promised the people peace, and to shew them the folly of that, God tells them they should have no peace themselves; they were very unfit to warrant the people, and pass their word to them, that no evil shall come upon them, when all evil is coming upon themselves, and they are not aware of it, ver. 12. Because the prophets and priests are prophane, therefore their ways shall be unto them, as slippery ways in the darkness. They that undertake to lead others, because they mislead them, and know they do so, they shall themselves have no comfort in their way. (1.) They pretend to shew others the way, but they shall themselves be in the dark, or in a mist, their light or sight shall fail: so that they shall not be able to look before them, shall have no forecast for themselves. (2.) They pretend to give assurances to others, but they themselves shall find no firm footing, their way shall be to them as slippery ways, in which they shall not go with any steadiness, safety, or satisfaction. (3.) They pretend to make the people easy with their flatteries, but they shall themselves be uneasy, they shall be driven, forced forward as captives, or making their escape as those that are pursued, and they shall fall in the way by which they hoped to escape, and so fall into the enemy's hands. (4.) They pretend to prevent the evil that threatens others, but God will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, the time fixed for calling them to an account; and such a time is fixed concerning all that do not judge themselves; and it will be an evil time. The year of visitation is the year of recompences. It is farther threatened, ver. 15. *I will feed them with wormwood or poison*, with that which is not only nauseous but noxious, and make them drink waters of gall, or, as some read it, juice of hemlock, see chap. ix. 15. And justly is the cup of trembling put into their hand first, for from the prophets of Jerusalem, that should have been patterns of piety and every thing that is praise-worthy, even from them is profaneness gone forth into all the lands. Nothing more effectually debaucheth a nation than the debauchery of ministers.

6. The people are here warned not to give any credit to these false prophets; for though they flattered them with hope, of impunity, the judgments of God would certainly break out against them, unless they repented, ver. 16. Take notice what God saith, and hearken not to the words of these prophets; for you will find in the issue God's word shall stand and not theirs. God's word will make you serious, but they make you vain, feed you with vain hopes, which will fail you at last. They tell you, *No evil shall come upon you*; but hear what God saith, ver. 19. *Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury.* They tell you, all shall be calm and serene, but God tells you, there is a storm coming, a whirlwind of the Lord, of his sending, and therefore there is no standing before it: It is a whirlwind raised by divine wrath; it is gone forth in fury; a wind that is brought forth out of the treasures of divine vengeance, and therefore it is a grievous whirlwind, and shall light heavy, with rain and hail upon the head of the wicked, which they cannot avoid, nor find any shelter from. It shall fall upon the wicked prophets themselves, that deceived the people, and the wicked people that suffered themselves to be deceived. A horrible tempest shall be the portion of their cup, Psalm xi. 6. This sentence is bound on as irreversible, ver. 20. *The anger of the Lord shall not return*: for the decree is gone forth, God will not alter his mind, nor suffer his anger to be turned away, till he have executed to sentence, and performed the thoughts of his heart, God's whirlwind when it comes down from heaven returneth not thither, but accomplish that for which he sent it, Isa. lv. 11. This they will not consider now, but in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly, consider it with understanding, so the word is; or, with consideration. Note, Those that will not fear the threatenings shall feel the execution of them, and will then perfectly understand what they will not now admit the evidence of, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a just and jealous God. They that will not consider in time, will be made to consider when it is too late. Son, remember.

7. Divers things are here offered to the consideration of these false prophets for their conviction, that, if possible, they might be brought to recant their error, and acknowledge the cheat they had put upon God's people.

1. Let them consider, that though they may impose upon men, God is too wise to be imposed upon. Men cannot see through their fallacies, but God can and doth. Here,

(1.) God asserts his own omnipresence and omniscience in general, ver. 23, 24. When they told the people that no evil should befall them though they went on in their evil ways, they went upon atheistical principles, that the Lord doth not see their sin, that he cannot judge through the dark cloud, that he will not require it; and therefore they must be taught the first principles of their religion, and confronted with the most incontestible self-evident truths; (1.) That though God's throne is prepared in the heavens

heavens, and this earth seems to be at a distance from him, yet he is a God here in this lower world which seems to be afar off, as well as in the upper world, which seems to be at hand, *ver. 23.* The eye of God is the same on earth that it is in heaven; here it runs to and fro as well as there, *2 Chron. xvi. 9.* And what is in the minds of men, whose spirits are veiled in flesh, is as clearly seen by him, as what is in the minds of angels, those unveiled spirits above that surround his throne. The power of God is the same on earth among the inhabitants of that, that it is heaven among the armies of that; with us nearness and distance make a great difference both in our observations and our operations, but it is not so with God; to him darkness and light, at hand, and afar off, are both alike. (2.) That how ingenious and industrious soever men are to disguise themselves, and their own characters and counsels, they cannot possibly be concealed from God's all-seeing eye, *ver. 24.* Can any hide himself in the secret places of the earth, that I shall not see him? Can any hide his projects and intentions in the secret places of the heart, that I shall not see them? No arts of concealment can hide men from the eye of God, nor deceive his judgment of them, (3.) That he is every where present; he doth not only rule heaven and earth, and uphold both by his universal providence, but he fills heaven and earth by his essential presence, *Psalms cxxxix. 7, 8, &c.* No place can either include him, or exclude him.

(2.) He applies this to these prophets, that had a notable art of disguising themselves, *ver. 25, 26.* I have heard what the prophets said, that prophecy lies in my name; they thought he was so wholly taken up with the other world, that he had no leisure to take cognizance of what passed in this: But God will make them know, that he knows all their impostures, all they shams they have put upon the world under colour of divine revelation. What they intended to humour the people with, they pretended to have had from God in a dream, when there was no such thing. This they could not discover; if a man tell me he dreamed so and so, I cannot contradict him; he knows I cannot; but God discovered the fraud. Perhaps the false prophets whispered what they had to say in the ears of such as were their confidants, saying, so and so I have dreamed, but God overheard them. The heart-searching eye of God traced them in all the methods they took to deceive the people, and he cries out, *How long? Shall I always bear with them? Is it in the hearts of those prophets (so some read it) to be ever prophesying lies? And prophesying the deceits of their own hearts? Will they never see what an affront they put upon God, what an abuse they put upon the people, and what judgments they are preparing for themselves?*

2. Let them consider, that their palming upon people counterfeit revelations, and fathering their own fancies upon divine inspiration, was the ready way to bring all religion into contempt, and make men turn atheists and infidels; and this was the thing they really intended, though they frequently made mention of the name of God, and prefaced all they said with, *Thus saith the Lord.* Yet, saith God, *They think to cause my people to forget my name, by their dreams:* they designed to draw people off from the worship of God, from all regard to God's laws and ordinances, and the true prophets, as their fathers forgot God's name for Baal. Note, The great thing Satan aims at is to make people forget God, and all that whereby he has made himself known; and he has many subtle methods to bring them to this: sometimes he doth it by setting up false gods; bring men in love with Baal, and they soon forget the name of God; sometimes by misrepresenting the true God, as if he was altogether such a one as ourselves: Pretences to new revelation may prove as dangerous to religion, as the denying of all revelation; and false prophets in God's name may perhaps do more mischief to the power of godliness, than false prophets in Baal's name, as being less guarded against.

3. Let them consider what a vast difference there was between their prophecies, and those that were delivered by the true prophets of the Lord, *ver. 28.* The prophet that has a dream, which was that way of inspiration, that the false prophets most pretended to, if he has a dream, let him tell it as a dream; so Mr. Gataker reads it; let him lay no more stress upon it than men do upon their dreams, nor expect any more regard to be had to it; let them not say, it is from God, nor call their foolish dreams divine oracles; but let the true prophet that has my word, speak my word faithfully, speak it as a truth; so some read it; let him keep close to his instructions, and you will soon perceive a vast difference between the dreams that the false prophets tell, and the divine dictates which the true prophets deliver; he that pretends to have a message from God, whether by dream or voice, let him declare it, and it will easily appear which is of God and which is not. Those that have spiritual senses exercised will be able to distinguish, for what is the chaff to the wheat? The promises of peace which these prophets make to you, are no more to be compared to God's promises, than chaff to wheat. Men's fancies are light, and vain, and worthless, as the chaff, which the wind drives away. But the word of God hath substance in it; it is of value, is food for the soul, the bread of life. Wheat was the staple commodity of Canaan, that valley of vision, *Deut. viii. 1. Ezek. xxvii. 17.* There is as much difference between the vain fancies of men and the pure word of God, as between the chaff and the wheat. It follows, *ver. 29.* Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord? Is their word so? Has it the power and efficacy that the word of God has? No, nothing like it; there is no more comparison than between painted fire and real fire. Theirs is like an *ignis fatuus*, leading men into by-paths and dangerous precipices. Note, The word of God is like fire. The law was a fiery law, *Deut. xxxiii. 2.* and of the gospel, Christ saith, *I am come to send fire on the earth,* *Luke xii. 49.* Fire has different effects, according as the matter is on which it works; it hardens clay, but softens wax; it consumes the dross, but purifies the gold; so the word of God is to some a favour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. God appeals here to the consciences of those to whom the word was sent, *Is not my word like fire?* Has it not been so to you? *Zeck. i. 6.* speak as you have found. It is compared likewise to a hammer breaking the rock in pieces; the unhumiliated heart of man is like a rock, if it will not be melted by the word of God as the fire, it will be broken to pieces by it as the hammer. Whatever opposition is given to the word, it will be borne down and broken to pieces.

4. Let them consider, that while they went on in this course, God was against them. Three times they are told this, *ver. 30, 31, 32.* Behold, I am against the prophets. They pretended to be for God, and made use of his name, but were really against him; he looks upon them as they were really, and is against them. How can they be long safe, or at all easy, that have a God of almighty power against them? While these prophets were promising peace to the people, God was proclaiming war against them. They stand indicted here,

1. For robbery: *They steal my word every one from his neighbour.* Some understand it of that word of God which the good prophets preached; they stole their sermons, their expressions, and mingled them with their own, as hucksters mingle bad waters with good to make them vendible. Those that were strangers to the spirit of the true prophets, mimicked their language, picked up some good sayings of their's, and delivered them to the people as if they had been their own, but with an ill grace; it was not of a piece with the rest of their discourses. *The legs of the lame are not*

equal, so is a parable in the mouth of fools, *Prov. xvi. 7.* Others understand it of the word of God as it was received and entertained by some of the people; they stole it out of their hearts, as the wicked one in the parable is said to steal the good word of the seed, *Mat. xxi. 19.* By their insinuations they diminished the authority, and so weakened the efficacy of the word of God upon the minds of those that seemed to be under convictions by it.

2. They stand indicted for counterfeiting the broad seal. Therefore God is against them, *ver. 31.* because they use their tongues at their pleasure in their discourses to the people, they say what they themselves think fit, and then father it upon God, pretend they had it from him, and say, *He saith it.* Some read it, *they smooth their tongues,* they are very complaisant to the people, and say nothing but what is pleasing and plausible; they never reprove them or threaten them, but their words are smoother than butter; thus they ingratiate themselves with them, and get money by them, and they have the impudence and impiety to make God the patron of their lies; they say, he saith so. What greater indignity can be done to the God of truth, than to lay the brats of the father of lies at his door?

3. They stand indicted as common cheats, *ver. 32.* I am against them, for they prophesy false dreams, pretending that to be a divine inspiration, which is but an invention of their own; this is a horrid fraud; nor will it excuse them to say, *caveat emptor, and si populus, vult decipi, decipitur.* No, it is the people's fault that they err, that they take things upon trust, and do not try the spirits; but it is much more their fault, that they cause God's people to err by their lies, and by their lightness, by the flatteries of their preaching, soothing them up in their sins, and by the looseness and lewdness of their conversation, encouraging them to persist in them. (1.) God disowns their having any commission from him, *I sent them not, nor commanded them;* they are not God's messengers, nor is what they say his message. (2.) He therefore justly denies his blessing with them. *Therefore they shall not profit this people at all.* All the profit they aim at is to make them easy, but they shall not so much as do that; for God's providence will at the same time be making them uneasy. *They do not profit this people,* so some read it; and more is implied than is expressed; they not only do them no good, but do them a great deal of hurt. Note, Those that corrupt the word of God, while they pretend to preach it, are so far from edifying the church, that they do it the greatest mischief imaginable.

33. ¶ And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD. 34. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house. 35. Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken? 36. And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts, our God. 37. Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken? 38. But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because you say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD: 39. Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence. 40. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

The profaneness of the people, with that of the priests and prophets, is here proved in a particular instance, which may seem of small moment in comparison of their greater crimes; but profaneness in common discourse, and the debauching of the language of a nation, being a notorious evidence of the prevalency of wickedness in it, we are not to think it strange, that this matter was so largely and warmly insisted upon here. Observe,

1. The sin here charged upon them is bantering God's prophets, and the dialect they used, and jesting with sacred things: they asked, *what is the burden of the Lord?* *ver. 33.* and *ver. 34.* they say, *the burden of the Lord,* and *ver. 35.* This was the word that gave great offence to God, that whenever they spake of the word of the Lord, they called it in scorn and derision *the burden of the Lord.* Now, (1.) This was a word that the prophets much used, and used it seriously, to shew what a weight the word of God was upon their spirits, of what importance it was, and how pressingly it should come upon those that heard it: The words of the false prophets had nothing ponderous in them, but God's words had; those were as chaff, these as wheat. Now the profane scoffers took this word, and made a jest and a by-word of it; they made people merry with it, that so, when the prophets used it, they might not make people serious with it. Note, It has been the artifice of Satan in all ages, to obstruct the efficacy of sacred things by turning them into matter of sport and ridicule; the mocking of God's messengers was the baffling of his messages. (2.) Perhaps this word was caught at and reproached by the scoffers as an improper word, newly coined by the prophets, and not used in that sense by any classic author. It was only in this and the last ages that the word of the Lord was called *the burden of the Lord,* and it could not be found in their lexicons to have that signification. But if men take a liberty, as we see they do, to form new phrases which they think more expressive and significant in other parts of learning, why not in divinity? But especially we must observe it as a rule, that the Spirit of God is not tied to our rules of speaking. (3.) Some think that, because when the word of the Lord is called a burden, it signifies some word of reproof and threatening which would lay a load upon the hearers (yet I know not whether that observation will always hold) that in using this word *the burden of the Lord* in a canting way, they reflected upon God as always hearing hard upon them, always teasing them, always frightening them, and so making the word of God a perpetual uneasiness to them. They make the word of God a burden to themselves, and then quarrel with the ministers for making it a burden to them. Thus the scoffers of the latter days, while they slight heaven and salvation, reproach faithful ministers for preaching hell and damnation. Upon the whole

while we may observe, That how light soever men may make of it, the great God takes notice of and is much displeased with those that burlesque sacred things, and that they may make a jest of scripture truths and laws, put jests upon scripture language. In such wit as this I am sure there is no wisdom, and so it will appear at last. *Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.* Those that were here guilty of this sin were some of the false prophets, who perhaps came to steal the word of God from the true prophets, some of the priests who perhaps came to seek occasions against them on which to ground an information, and some of the people who had learned of the profane priests and prophets to play with the things of God. The people would not have affronted the prophet and his God thus, if the priests and the prophets, those ringleaders of mischief, had not shewn them the way.

2. When they are reprov'd for this profane way of speaking, they are directed how to express themselves more decently. We do not find that the prophets are directed to make no more use of this word; we find it used long after this, *Zech. iv. 1. Mal. i. 1. Nah. i. 1. Hab. i. 1.* And we do not find it once used in this sense by Jeremiah either before or after. It is true indeed, that in many cases it is advisable to make no use of such words and things as some have made an ill use of, and it may be prudence to avoid such phrases as, though innocent enough, are in danger of being perverted and made stumbling-blocks: But here God will have the prophet stick to his rule, *chap. xv. 19. Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.* Do not thou leave off using this word, but let them leave off abusing it; *ye shall not mention the burden of the Lord any more in this profane careless manner, ver. 46.* for it is perverting the words of the living God, and making an ill use of them, which is an impious dangerous thing, for consider he is the Lord of hosts our God. Note, If we will but look upon God, as we ought to do in his greatness and goodness, and be but duly sensible of our relation and obligation to him, it may be hoped, we will not dare to affront him by making a jest of his words. It is an impudent thing to abuse him that is the living God, the Lord of hosts, and our God. How then must they express themselves? He tells them, *ver. 37. Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, when thou art enquiring of him, What hath the Lord answered thee? And what hath the Lord spoken? And ver. 35. they must say thus, when they enquire of their neighbours.* Note, We must always speak of the things of God reverently and seriously, and as becomes the oracles of God. It is a commendable practice to enquire after the mind of God, to enquire of our brethren what they have heard, to enquire of our prophets what they have to say from God; but then, to shew that we do it for a right end, we must do it after a right manner. Ministers may learn here, when they reprove people for what they say and do amiss, to teach them how to say and do better.

3. Because they would not leave off this ill way of speaking, though they were admonished of it, God threatens them here with utter ruin. They would still say, *the burden of the Lord*, though God had sent to them to forbid them, *ver. 38.* What little regard have those to the divine authority, that will not be persuaded by it to leave an idle word. But see what will come of it;

2. Those shall be severely reckoned with, that thus pervert the words of God, that put a wrong construction on them, and make ill use of them; and it shall be made to appear, what a great provocation it is to God to mock his messengers. *I will even punish that man and his house*, whether he be prophet, or priest, or one of the common people, it shall be visited upon him, *ver. 34.* Perverting God's word, and ridiculing the preaching of it, is a sin that brings ruining judgments upon families, and entails a curse upon a house. Another threatening we have, *ver. 36. Every man's word shall be his own burden*, i. e. the guilt of this sin shall be so heavy upon him, as to sink him into the pit of destruction. *God shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves*, Psalm lxxiv. 8. God will give them enough of their jest, so that the burden of the Lord they shall have no heart to mention any more; it will be too heavy to make a jest of. They are as the madman that casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, while they pretend to be in sport.

2. The words of God, though thus perverted, shall be accomplished. Do they ask, *What is the burden of the Lord?* Let the prophet ask them, *what burden they mean?* Is it this, *I will even forsake you?* *ver. 33.* This is the burden that shall be laid and bound upon them, *ver. 39, 40. Behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you.* I will leave you, and have no thoughts of returning to you. These are miserable indeed, that are forsaken and forgotten of God, and men's bantering God's judgments will not baffle them. Jerusalem was the city God had taken to himself as a holy city, and then given to them and their fathers; but that shall now be forsaken and forgotten. God had taken them to be a people near to him, but they shall now be cast out of his presence. They had been great and honourable among the nations, but now God will bring upon them an everlasting reproach, and a perpetual shame; both their sin and their punishment shall be their lasting disgrace. It is here upon record to their infamy, and will remain so to the world's end. Note, God's word will be magnified and made honourable, when those that mock at it shall be vilified and made contemptible. *They that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.*

C H A P. XXIV.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we had a general prediction of the utter ruin of Jerusalem, that it should be forsaken and forgotten; which, whatever effect it had upon others, we have reason to think made the prophet himself very melancholy: Now in this chapter, God encourageth him by shewing him, that though the desolation seemed to be universal, yet all were not equally involved in it, but God knew how to distinguish, how to separate between the precious and the vile. Some were gone into captivity already with Jeconiah, over them Jeremiah lamented, but God tells him it should turn to their good: others yet remained hardened in their sins, against whom Jeremiah had a just indignation; but those, God tells him, should go into captivity, and it should prove to their hurt. To inform the prophet of this, and affect him with it; here is, (1.) A vision of two baskets of figs, one very good, and the other very bad, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* (2.) The explication of this vision, applying the good figs to those that were already sent into captivity for their good, *ver. 4—7.* The bad figs to those that should hereafter be sent into captivity for their hurt, *ver. 8, 9, 10.*

1. THE LORD shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. 2. One basket had very good figs,

even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. 3. Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? and I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. 4. ¶ Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 5. Thus saith the LORD the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. 6. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. 7. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. 8. ¶ And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt: 9. And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. 10. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.

This short chapter helps us to put a very comfortable construction upon a great many long ones, by shewing us, that the same providence which to some is a favour of death unto death, may by the grace and blessing of God be made to others a favour of life unto life: And that though God's people share with others in the same calamity, yet it is not the same to them that it is to others, but is designed for their good, and shall issue in their good; to them it is a correcting rod in the hand of a tender father, while to others it is an avenging sword in the hand of a righteous judge.

Observe, 1. The date of this sermon. It was after, a little after, Jeconiah's captivity, *ver. 1.* Jeconiah was himself a despoiled broken vessel, but with him were carried away some very valuable persons, Ezekiel for one, *chap. i. 2.* many of the princes of Judah then went into captivity, Daniel and his fellows were carried off a little before; of the people only the carpenters and the smiths were forced away, either because the Chaldeans needed some ingenious men of those trades, they had a great plenty of astrologers and star-gazers, but a great scarcity of smiths and carpenters; or because the Jews would have a great loss of them, and would for want of them be unable to fortify their cities, and furnish themselves with weapons of war. Now it should seem, there were many good people carried away in that captivity, which the pious prophet laid much to heart, while there were those that triumphed in it, and insulted over those to whose lot it fell to go into captivity. Note, We must not conclude concerning the first and greatest sufferers, that they were the worst and greatest sinners; for perhaps it may appear quite otherwise, as it did here.

2. The vision by which this distinction of the captives was represented to the prophet's mind. He saw two baskets of figs, set before the temple, there ready to be offered as first-fruits to the honour of God. Perhaps the priests being remiss in their duty, were not ready to receive them and dispose of them according to the law, and therefore Jeremiah sees them standing before the temple. But that which was the significance of the vision was, that the figs in one basket were extraordinary good, those in the other basket extremely bad. The children of men are all as the fruits of the fig-tree, capable of being made serviceable to God and man, *Judg. ix. 11.* but some are as good figs, than which nothing more pleasant, others as damaged rotten figs, than which nothing more nauseous. What creature viler than a wicked man, and what more valuable than a godly man. The good figs were like those that are first ripe, which are most acceptable, *Micah vii. 1.* and most prized when newly come into season. The bad figs are such as could not be eaten, they were so evil; they could not answer the end of their creation, were neither pleasant nor good for food, and what then were they good for? If God has no honour from men, nor their generation any service, they are even like the bad figs, that cannot be eaten, that will not answer any good purpose; if the just has lost its favour, it is thenceforth fit for nothing but the dunghill. Of the persons that are presented to the Lord at the door of his tabernacle, some are sincere, and they are very good; others dissemble with God, and they are very bad; sinners are the worst of men, hypocrites the worst of sinners. *Corruptio optimi est pessima.*

3. The exposition and application of this vision. God intended by it to raise the dejected spirits of those that were gone into captivity, by assuring them of a happy return, and to humble and awaken the proud and secure spirits of those who continued yet in Jerusalem, by assuring them of a miserable captivity.

1. Here is the moral of the good figs, that were very good, the first ripe, those represented the pious captives, that seemed first ripe for ruin, for they went first into captivity, but should prove first ripe for mercy, and their captivity should help to ripen them; they are pleasing to God, as good figs are to us, and shall be carefully preserved for use. Now observe here,

(1.) Those that were already carried into captivity were the good figs that God would own. This shews, (1.) That we cannot determine of God's love or hatred by all that is before us. When God's judgments are abroad, they are not always the worst that are first seized by them. (2.) That early suffering sometimes proves for the best to us. The sooner the child is corrected, the better effect the correction is likely to have: those that went first into captivity, were as the son whom the father loves and chastens betimes, chastens while there is hope, and it did well; but those that staid behind, were like a child long left to himself, who when afterwards corrected is stubborn and made worse by it, *Lam. iii. 27.*

(2.) God owns their captivity to be his doing: whoever were the instruments of it, he ordered and directed it, *ver. 5. I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans.* It is God that puts his gold into the furnace to be tried; his hand is, in an especial manner, to be eyed in the afflictions of good people. The judge orders the malefactor into the hand of an executioner, but the father corrects the child with his own hand.

(3.) Even